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IN EXCHANGE FOR A SOUL

A Novel

BY

MARY LINSKILL

AUTHOR OF

'BETWEEN THE HEATHER AND THE NORTHERN SEA,' 'HAGAR,'
'THE HAVEN UNDER THE HILL,' ETC.



IN THREE VOLUMES

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IN EXCHANGE FOR A SOUL.

CHAPTER XLVII.

IN THE DEAD OF THE NIGHT.

‘God answers sharp and sudden on some prayers,
And thrusts the thing we have prayed for in our face,
A gauntlet with a gift in it.’

E. B. BROWNING.

Not a moment—not one moment might be given to deliberation. Thought would undo all.

‘I have thought too much,’ Thorhilda Theyn said to herself. ‘*Now* I must act.’

Endure long as we may, long as we can, if at any time we determine to cease from endurance, there is always a determining cause. As a rule this cause comes suddenly; as a rule it is a trifling one; *very* trifling if compared with our months or years of suffering.

The working-man who strikes his wife—

perhaps half-murders her — and so brings himself into public disgrace for the remainder of his life, because his dinner was not ready at the time he needed it, may perhaps not have known for years past what it was to have a meal decently cooked, and ready in time. All his years of patience go for nothing in a moment, so far as the world is concerned. In a dim and dumb way he *may* thank God in his prison-cell that there is another world, but he is not very likely to know much of thankfulness of any kind, any more than his wife will know of remorse or of repentance.

No, the remorse must be all his, who forgot himself after long years of patient endurance ; and largely the feeling is born of what he knows the world to be feeling toward him. He had a trifling grievance to bear *for once*, and he struck a helpless and defenceless woman. Such is he in the eyes of the little world all about him.

It is a typical case ; there are thousands such—thousands that would show how one moment will undo all that years have done.

Such a moment had come to Miss Theyn, of all people one the most ill-adapted to bearing

it. That cry in the church—that piercing, bitter, betraying cry—had undone all. She did not once think of it—not with anything like deliberate thought—yet her very brain seemed on fire with the sound of it. Think of it! She was possessed by it. All the world—all the little world about her—would know to-morrow. They would know of her scream, how it had pierced her through and through till she could bear no more.

All round her room there were preparations for the following Tuesday—the day that was to have been the wedding-day. Her wedding-gown hung in the wardrobe—a rich, lustrous dress of white silk, and lace, and ribbons, and flowers. Her bridal veil, with its wreath of orange-blossoms, lay carefully folded by her aunt's own hands in the drawer below, folded and covered with white tissue paper, that it might not be seen or touched any more till the eventful morning. On the dressing-table was the box which Percival Meredith had brought only the day before for her acceptance. It contained a necklace of family jewels, diamonds, and pearls, which he had had reset for her. They were very beautiful ;

she had admired them ; she had put the necklace round her throat for her aunt Milicent to see whether it fitted well, and she had felt a momentary pleasure in them. Now the mere outside of the case was an added pang.

Close to it was another case, containing the four lockets, the four bracelets for her bridesmaids. These had been brought for her inspection only. They were Percival's presents—lockets and bracelets of gold, with a monogram on each in pearls and turquoise. What would Gertrude Douglas say ? What would Maura, and Helaine, and Clarimond Thelton think ? These were the four girls she had herself asked to stand beside her at the altar next Tuesday—less than a week hence. What would it be possible for them to think or say ?

On reaching the Rectory, Miss Theyn had dismissed Mr. Egerton, not ungratefully.

‘I know *now* that you have seen, have understood all,’ she said, yet in a state of extreme nervous agitation, as he perceived ; ‘but do not think too hardly of me. Try to think the best you can, will you ?’

‘I hope I am not given to thinking hard things of anyone. If I tried I should never

be able to think other than kindly of you. . . . But—may I say it? may I speak as if I were your brother?—will you not reconsider, *even now?* Such things have been done before to-day.’

Thorhilda held out her hand. ‘Thank you! Good-night! good-bye! Again I thank you!’

Going indoors, she had sent a message to her aunt, simply saying that she was not quite well and would go to her own room.

Mrs. Godfrey had no suspicion; she sat reading, waiting for her husband’s return, and finding he did not come, she supposed that he had been sent for to see some sick person. That happened so often that she was quite accustomed to it. ‘I will go to bed,’ she said to herself at last, ‘but I must see how Thorda is first.’

Thorhilda’s door was unfastened. Mrs. Godfrey tapped, and then went in as usual. Even now there was nothing to arouse question. The room looked as it had done for some weeks past—a little crowded, a little disarranged. Her niece was not in bed.

‘How is this, dear?’ she said, going round

to the sofa, where a pale figure sat, with clasped rigid hands, white set face, and eyes that seemed to burn in their brilliance. 'How is this? I thought you had gone to bed long ago, and I would not disturb you. What is it? The old enemy—a bad headache?'

'My head does ache, I think.'

'Be thankful, darling, that it isn't your heart that aches,' Mrs. Godfrey answered, certainly not meaning to be unkind, and not dreaming that she could be unperceptive.

To Thorda the speech was as if some one had cast a stone at her. For one moment—one wildly agitating moment—she had had an impulse to throw herself at her aunt's feet, to confess all, beseech her aid; but a second glance at the tall, stately figure, at the beautiful, undisturbed, unperceptive face, the blue eyes that could change and look cold and surprised, even angry—this second glance made the suffering girl shudder to think of her impulse, and the consternation that would have been had she obeyed it. Besides, there was the strong conviction that no good could

come of any such betrayal. 'I should have been over-persuaded. . . . All chance of escape would have been at an end.'

'Do go to bed, dear,' Mrs. Godfrey urged. 'You are looking quite worn. This will never do, and the 11th so near! By the way, have you seen the parcel that came to-night? It came whilst you were at church. No? I fancy it is from Lady Margaret; it is certainly like her handwriting. I should not wonder if it is another silver tray—it looked like that. What a pity it is that so many of your presents are duplicates!'

Thorhilda did not reply; she felt her heart hardening under this unseeing gentleness of speech and manner. One word—one understanding word—and that night's work—that sad night's work—had never been done.

But the word was not said. Mrs. Godfrey went away, offering to send tea, sal-volatile, wine and hot water; but these were not the things her niece was needing. With a warm, loving kiss, a word of benediction that seemed to have no blessing in it, Mrs. Godfrey parted from her niece. For a long while Thorhilda sat by the fire in silence.

Thought itself was silent—she dared not think.

Some time after midnight she heard her uncle opening the door of his study. Her heart beat the quicker for the sound. No shadow of resentment crossed her mind—nay, rather did she feel sorrow, regret for the pain she knew she had caused to him. His intention had been of the best. He had been moved to speak thus by his conscience ; by the highest and holiest influences acting upon his sensitive soul. And he could not have dreamed of any such result as that which had actually happened.

What *had* he dreamed of ?

Had Miss Theyn once asked herself this question, once tried in solitude and quietness of soul to answer it, she must have been impelled to a mood different from that which was dominating her now.

One idea had entered into her soul, taken complete and absorbing possession of it, as she left the church ; and nothing since had shaken it, or lessened its persistent weight.

There was only one way of escape, only one ; and this she must follow.

‘What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?’

All night the words rang in her ears: while she sat watching the flickering blaze of the fire; while she knelt by her bedside, in dumb, wordless prayer; while she paced to and fro across her room; ever and again between the wailing of the winter wind there came the words, coming like a cry, a plea:

‘What will you give in exchange for your soul?’

And now her answer was ready.

‘I will give *all*.

‘I will sacrifice this prospect that has seemed so much to me; and in doing so *now* I must pay the price for the sin of indulging in it so often; the sin of yielding to a temptation that I knew—that all the while I knew to be a temptation—tempting me from the right—and for what? . . . For these?’ she said, looking round upon the costly jewellery, the splendid dress. ‘Was it possible that I could be so drawn away *for these*?’

No; in a calm moment she was constrained to admit that it was not mere finery, not mere luxury, that had been her temptation. There

had been many things beyond, a multiplicity of ideas merging in one. There had been the dread of an uncertain future : with the sight of Garlaff Grange and its unlovely, unseemly poverty on the one hand ; of Ormston Magna and all its graceful and artistic ease on the other.

‘I was tempted, and I fell.’

That was all she could say now. ‘I have been tempted, and I have fallen ; but I will fall no farther. There is one way of escape, only one, and that one, agonizing though it be, I will take. . . . I must take it. . . . There is no other way.’

All these things were said as one speaking in a kind of trance might have spoken. That moment in the church had marked a certain amount of disorganization of the brain.

A discerning man, a psychologist as well as a physiologist, said some time ago that from the first betrayal of temper on the part of a wayward girl to the last raving of the maniac in the cell of a lunatic asylum there is no break, no missing link in the chain of aberration. This is not understood as it ought to be. There is only One who understands.

We blame this man for this divergence from what we conceive to be right ; that woman for that ; while all the while, what know we ?

When Christ forgave the woman taken in sin, brought before Him by vehement accusers, doubtless these same accusers were startled.

‘ I do not condemn thee. Go, and sin no more.’

So He spake ; but there was none left to hear this conclusion. Self-condemned they had gone out from His pure Presence.

They had perceived that He understood ; that not only His compassion, but His comprehension, passed far beyond theirs. They were silenced.

One cannot help somewhat envying that sinful woman. Her sin was *understood* ; and it was not condemned.

‘ We, even *we*, pardon all that we comprehend,’ says the old French proverb ; and, ah, the truth of it !

We comprehend so little. We see the sin, but not the temptation. We witness the fall, but not the oft-repeated, and greatly-

prolonged strife which has preceded the fatal moment.

It was Thorhilda Theyn's misfortune that in this hour of her deepest trial she had no friend to whom she could turn in all her weakness, all her despair, all her sense of wrong-doing, and say, 'Forgive me, save me, help me to save myself!'

Only one thing she had strength to resolve upon : she would sin no farther, not in the same direction. If the idea she was now resolved to carry out was also a sin, surely it were a more venial one, surely it were more easily forgiven, since it involved such desperate pain.

So the night passed, not in thought, not in prayer, but in a dull mechanical semblance of each.

It was some hours past midnight when at last she sat down by her writing-table.

'I must at least say "good-bye," dear Aunt Milicent,' she began. 'And I must ask you to forgive me. This will seem like terrible ingratitude for all that you have been to me. I dare not think of it, of all that I know you will suffer. Yet no one can blame you. As for dear Uncle Hugh, I must not let myself

think of him. Yet *it is his doing. He has saved me.* It is his word that has helped me, given me back the power to see things in their true light. . . . And there was no other way of escape but this—at least I cannot see any other. How could I remain here with that day, that dread day so near, and refuse to keep my promise? All the world about me would have thought me mad. I had no excuse for further delay, not one; and as for breaking off the engagement *now*, when all is ready down to the ordering of the last dish for the breakfast, and yet remaining here, you will see for yourself how impossible *that* would have been. No; I have no resource but this. . . . I cannot write of it. . . . I can write no more of anything. My brain is strangely tortured. *It does not seem my own*, but some one else's brain—one that I cannot understand. Yet it seems that I must obey its dictates, write what it bids me write, do what it bids me do. . . . Again I entreat you to forgive me, and if you can, forget me. Dear Aunt Milicent, I never loved you more than I do at this moment, believing that I shall never see you again. How good you have been to

me ! how kind ! Will anyone ever care for me again ?'

This was her weakest moment. Her hand trembled so that the words were nearly illegible ; yet no tears came, no sobs. She sat on, listening to the wind as it wailed round the house, tossing the trees close to her window, moaning in the casement. Then came a soft sudden dashing as of snow upon the window-pane ; yet she hardly heard it, or hearing, did not recognise.

So the night went on ; passed in an agony so intense as to be most mercifully benumbing.

When or how any purpose shaped itself in her mind she could not afterward recall. She had no remembrance of ever having looked into that future that was not terrible, only because it was not visible.

She had sinned ; and after sin punishment was sure to follow. 'Be sure your sin will find you out.' Not, 'Be sure your sin will be found out.' Sin often is not 'found out' of others ; but it finds one's self ; and shows no mercy in the finding.

But not even yet was the sense of wrongdoing Thorhilda Theyn's worst trouble. Full

knowledge, full consciousness, could only come with the return of the fuller tide of life. The hour for the utterance of the exceeding bitter cry of a perfect repentance had not yet struck.

And now the night was almost gone ; there was a faint light showing through the curtains when Miss Theyn once more took up her pen to add a final word.

‘ Again “good-bye,” again I ask you to forgive me. If I knew aught of my future I should think it best *for you* that I should keep silence. If you know nothing people cannot torture you to confide in them. (I am not meaning anyone in particular.) But I could not tell you if I would, for I know nothing myself. I know nothing but that I am leaving the happiest home that ever anyone had.

‘ Dear Uncle Hugh, what it is to leave you ! to go out into an unknown world ! . . . I dare not think ! . . . Once more “good-bye.” You can yet pray for your unhappy

‘ THORDA.’

* * * * *

About half an hour later a figure in a gray

cloak and closely fitting bonnet and veil passed out from the front-door of Yarburgh Rectory into a world of such wild whitening beauty as is seldom seen. Every tree in the garden stood in radiant white, each tiny branch with each of its curves fully developed against the deep indigo of the snow-laden sky beyond. The flakes were falling slowly, sadly ; the wind wailing less wildly and wearily ; yet it was a chilling wind, and swept through the very heart of the carefully nurtured girl who strove even in that hour of abandonment not to betray herself to herself by yielding to mere physical weakness.

‘Life can no more be what life has been,’ she said to herself. ‘I must learn to strive, to endure.’

So saying, she came to the big iron gates. It was a difficult matter to open them, to pass out, with snow under her feet, snow and wind driving overhead. And just then a sudden squall arose, seeming as if it swept upward from the great gray sea that lay darkling under the stormy snow-cloud. Wildly and more wildly it swept through the leafless trees ; the accumulated snow came

down in avalanches upon the slight gray figure that struggled onward with such bravery as might belong to a broken heart. In that hour life itself seemed over. All that could remain, at the best, would be endurance. Why live, only to endure? Surely there was a limit to human suffering!

‘I would be content to die, nay, glad to die,’ she said to herself, still striving with the bitter wind and the driving snow. ‘Strong men have died thus, beaten to their death by merciless storms. Why cannot I die? I should be so glad, so very glad to lie down under the nearest hedgerow, and so “swoon on to death.”’

Yet she strove onward; some principle and instinct of life within her urging her to strive.

So striving, the dawn-light slowly growing, the cruel storm increasing, she passed on, on beyond Yarburgh; far above the Bight of Ulvstan where the white water was breaking upon the scaur. Still onward she strove, and whither she went, none knew.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE DAY THAT CAME AFTER.

‘ ’Tis when we suffer, gentlest thoughts
Within the bosom spring.’

FABER.

IT was a wild tempestuous morning. The snow swept past the window-pane, the outside world was blotted from sight, the trees were snow-laden to the smallest branch ; and yet the flakes kept on falling, now wildly, now madly ; now gently and softly. Looking upward all was gray, and dim, and formless : looking below, all was white, and soft, and lovely and entrancing.

‘ One is almost glad to see it, for a change,’ Canon Godfrey said, rubbing his chill hands one over the other. For nearly an hour he had been reading in a fireless room. ‘ Yet how carelessly one says that!’ he added presently. ‘ One does not think at first, of all that

frost and snow must mean down in the Bight. . . . God help them all! How good they are, for the most part; how brave, how patient!

Still the big white flakes came whirling down, hiding the white-edged holly-tree: the tall cedar beyond, the dark Scotch firs that yet retained their picturesque form. Indoors all was perfect in the way of contrast. A large coal fire blazed vigorously; the lamp burned under the coffee-pot, warm dishes were appearing one after another upon the table—muffins, toast, eggs, grilled chicken.

‘Why doesn’t Thorda come?’ the Canon said at last, not speaking with quite his usual easiness. His remembrance of the night before was still too strong upon him for ease.

‘We will not wait, Hugh dear,’ Mrs. Godfrey said.

She was not angry, not displeased; yet in no way was she touched to any unwonted forbearance.

‘But it is not usual for her to be late!’ her husband urged.

‘All the more reason why we should give her a little grace when it does happen,’ Mrs. Godfrey replied lightly.

She spoke quite lightly and carelessly, and breakfast was begun and ended without further remonstrance on the part of Canon Godfrey ; but when he rose from the table he sent a message to his niece. Her aunt desired to know whether she was well enough to come down, or whether she preferred to have breakfast in her own room. Quite thinkingly he sent the message in his wife's name. He had not now to discern that there was some little rift within the lute that once had made only such sweet and pleasant music.

He felt a strong wish to see his niece again before going back to his study, to judge for himself as to how the distressing occurrence of the previous evening had added to the unhappiness he feared she had had before. He had not mentioned that sad moment to his wife, and since she had not mentioned it to him, he knew that Thorhilda had not cared to seek her aunt's sympathy. He understood his niece's reluctance to meet him ; and he knew that it would be better they should meet at once, and in the presence of a third person. He was sorry that she had not come

down as usual. It is always best and easiest to take no outward notice of an awkward moment. The inner soul is stronger for the external reticence.

It was Ellerton who had taken the Canon's message to Martha, the girl who waited upon Miss Theyn. It was Martha's answer that Ellerton brought.

The man entered the room, and stood for awhile by the sideboard with a strange look on his face.

'Well!' the Canon exclaimed, in an almost amused surprise.

He was not accustomed to see the somewhat loquacious Ellerton pale and speechless.

'She's not there, sir—Miss Theyn ; she's not there!' the man said at last.

'Not where? . . . Where have you been? What's the matter with you?' was the impatient questioning.

'Martha went upstairs, sir—she went to Miss Theyn's room! . . . And the bed! . . . It haven't been slept in, sir!'

A few seconds later Canon Godfrey himself stood gazing upon the bed where his niece should have slept. His wife was close beside

him ; with pallid faces they looked upon each other, and had no strength to speak.

They entered farther into the room, looked round upon the dainty, feminine arrangements. Some of the wedding presents were there ; the case containing the diamond necklace had been left half-open ; the locket and bracelets for the bridesmaids were in their cream-coloured velvet tray. The door of the wardrobe had been left open ; the glitter of the white dress showed in the gray light ; a spray of orange-blossoms festooning some tulle was visible. A rose-coloured dressing-gown was lying over a chair in front of the long-dead fire ; a pair of tiny woollen slippers were set up against the fender ; a prayer-book lay open upon the white coverlet of the bed.

It was the Canon who saw Thorhilda's letter lying upon the writing-table. It was addressed to his wife ; yet he knew that he should be sparing her if he opened it and read it. Quite calmly he read on from the first plea to the last, from the first confession to the last betrayal.

‘Dear Uncle Hugh, forgive me! What it

is to leave you, to go out into an unknown world! . . . I dare not think!’

Canon Godfrey read a part of the letter to his wife ; she begged to be allowed to see it, to read it herself ; but this he would not permit.

‘There is nothing in it you *need* to know, dear ; trust me for that, can you not?’

‘Trust *you* ! There is no one, no one else in all the world I *can* trust,’ she said with tearful eyes and trembling, hardly restrained lips. ‘But, Hugh, my darling Hugh, you will bring Thorda back ? You will not let her go ? . . . We will persuade her, we will persuade *him* ; there may be delay ; there must, I fear, be pain and even exposure. But it will come right in the end. Say that it will ! She cannot—she *cannot* be meaning now, at this eleventh hour, to say that she will not marry Percival!’

The Canon sighed. Would his wife *never* understand ? Within himself, and unknown to himself, he dreaded the labour of trying to bring about a full and clear comprehension. And in truth it was a difficult task. When all was done that might be done, all said that

might be said, Mrs. Godfrey was still irrational, unconvinced, more or less hopeful. The Canon could only sigh and turn away.

‘What are you going to do, Hugh dear?’ she asked plaintively. ‘What *can* you do? You have no clue?’

‘None whatever so far, not the very slightest. . . . I am going up to—to *her* room again, to see if I can find any. . . . No, dear, I would rather go alone. . . . Excuse me. You are not equal to going again to that room yet.’

Mrs. Godfrey was not unwilling to rest her aching head upon the cushions of her sofa. Meanwhile the Canon was moving about a dainty upper room, moving reverently, slowly, as he might have gone about some altar-place. At last he came upon a letter-case, and within it there was the rough draft of a letter—whether it had ever been rightly written and sent he could not tell. There was no indication, nor was there any superscription; it was only by internal evidence that he judged it to have been intended for a lady whom he knew to be living near London, a lady whom Thorhilda had only seen once for a few days in her

early girlhood, and of whom she could have known but very little except from hearsay. Was it *possible* that she could have taken refuge with so mere a stranger? Was it *possible* that she could have turned from a heart that lived and beat—humanly speaking—so truly for her, for her purest happiness, her highest good, to find shelter, sympathy, in a home all unknown to her—was this really within the bounds of possibility? Almost for the first time in his life a deadly faintness overcame Canon Godfrey as he sat down upon the sofa his niece had occupied so lately, and a strange unconsciousness passed upon him. Not till long afterwards did he know what that unconsciousness meant. When he did know, those about him said, ‘Too late! too late!’ Within himself there was joy, because he could say, ‘So soon!’

CHAPTER XLIX.

‘CAN YOU NOT BRING AGAIN MY BLESSED
YESTERDAY?’

‘And shame gives back what nothing else can give :
Man to himself,—then sets him up on high.’

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

HAVING that slight clue gathered from the rough draft of a letter, Canon Godfrey was spared the pain and mistake of making inquiries in the immediate neighbourhood of Yarburgh Rectory. Yet he had enough of pain before him. He was quite calm. Five minutes alone in prayer had been sufficient to insure for him hours of calmness. His first step was to ride over to Danesborough, send off a telegram or two, and arrange with a clerical friend there to take his place if he should be absent on the following Sunday. His next duty, to go over to Ormston Magna

and explain all before the tongue of gossip had had time to tell the sad story, was an unutterably painful one. Yet he seemed to see beforehand precisely how Percival Meredith would receive his news. There would be no cry of despair, no expression of unspeakable agony. And in thus thinking he was not mistaken. Naturally, the Merediths were surprised to see him. It was yet quite early; and the pallor, the stillness of his face was like a warning.

'Don't say that anybody at the Rectory is ill!' Mrs. Meredith cried, putting up her two pretty white hands as if she would ward off any evil news.

'Ill!' the Canon replied, with no answer to his interlocutor's half-smile on his grave face. 'If it were a question of mere illness I think I could bear to speak. . . . As it is. . . .'

'Whatever it is, tell us—*tell us at once!*' Mrs. Meredith cried impatiently, glancing at her son, who stood with a philosophic smile on his lip, turning a broad gold ring that was upon his finger with a certain meaning in the action.

There was no alarm upon his face, no anxiety. For very surprise the Canon could not speak.

‘And I thought myself prepared,’ he was saying to himself. Mrs. Meredith’s attitude was very different.

‘For heaven’s sake speak, Canon Godfrey—say what you have come to say!’ she urged. ‘I feel sure it is something dreadful; and I cannot bear suspense.’

‘Pardon me,’ Hugh Godfrey replied, lifting his sad eyes, turning his tense white face. ‘Do forgive me. It is as you say, something very terrible I have to disclose. . . . I can find no words. It is my niece—Thorhilda, who was to have been your son’s wife within the week. . . . It seems she. . . . she could not bear the thought of marriage now that it came so near. . . . And she has. . . . she has gone away; she left the Rectory this morning. . . . My wife hardly realizes it, I think.’

Mrs. Meredith’s laugh, a long, low, soft, unbelieving laugh, made Canon Godfrey shudder. The smile on the son’s face was worse than the mother’s laughter. Percival Meredith was the one to break the silence.

‘What a pretty comedy you have arranged!’ he remarked in the smoothest of tones. ‘I

am only sorry that you have given me the part of "fool" to play.'

Canon Godfrey could only turn in silent misery to Mrs. Meredith. His fine face was not discomfited by the sneer that was upon her lips.

'Would you ask us—would you even wish us to believe that you do not know where they have gone—the happy and interesting pair?'

'Who are you alluding to?' the Canon asked in sudden fierceness, and with most unusual lack of grammatical precision.

Mrs. Meredith was equal to the moment.

'I am not *alluding* to anyone. I am speaking of your pet niece, Miss Theyn, and her *fortunate* lover, Damian Aldenmede, a wandering artist, a penniless adventurer, who is doubtless at this moment congratulating himself on his good luck.'

Canon Godfrey had no alternative but to sit down in the chair nearest to him; and again that strange, appalling sense of powerlessness came over him, and he knew himself to be in the grasp of a power against which he could offer no resistance.

‘How many times must one die before death comes?’ was the silent cry of the much-tried heart within the man.

For some time he was silent. Then he rose to his feet, himself again, a Christian, and a gentleman, therefore considerate of those to whom it had been his duty to bring a painful disclosure.

‘I will forget what you have said, Mrs. Meredith; I can do that—not easily, but I can do it, knowing what I must know of your—your annoyance!’

‘That is the exact word,’ the lady replied proudly. ‘I am annoyed—my son is annoyed—how should we be otherwise? We shall be a laughing-stock for the Three Ridings! But be assured that we shall recover; it is not impossible that we may live to be grateful for what has happened.’

For some time longer the Canon stood there, feeling it a mere matter of duty to endure the last scornful sentence, the final bitter word. Percival Meredith’s smiling and supercilious silence was as difficult to bear as anything his mother could say.

The Canon took his leave at last. His

gray-white face—the look of hidden suffering written there—made no impression upon those who watched him as he departed. To either of them it was but an hypocrisy the more.

They were able to comfort each other—the mother and son; and before half the day was over to assure each other that all was for the best. And as for the gossip, the amusement—well, they were above it, apart from it. It would not come near them, and they need not go to seek it.

‘We can afford it, Percy; we can afford even this!’ Mrs. Meredith said with a satirical pride not made too evident. ‘We must let no one see that Miss Theyn’s elopement causes us anything but a very mitigated regret.’

And, indeed, there was nothing else to be seen. If Percival Meredith did imagine once or twice for a few moments that he suffered deeper, truer grief, it was not necessary on that account that any compassion should be wasted upon him. His strength was equal to his grief.

As a matter of course, within four-and-twenty hours the news had spread every-

where; with the usual exaggerations and additions, more than one of which might have been traced to Ormston Magna.

It is only fair to say that no one who had really known either Thorhilda Theyn or Damian Aldenmede dreamt that there could be the slightest grain of truth in the rumour that included these two names in one hateful lie.

When it was repeated to Barbara Burdas, the woman who uttered it had reason for wishing that the gift of reticence had been hers. Barbara was silent for a moment; the hot, rapid colour spread over her face and neck; a strange sudden light flashed from her eyes.

‘Are they daring to say that? and of *her*, of *him*?’ she exclaimed in a very passion of earnestness. ‘Good heavens, what a world this is! Is there ever a good man or woman in it that escapes slander and lying? Is there one? To think that any human lips could dare to utter a lie like that!’

Later, Barbara seemed to understand how it had been with Miss Theyn at the last. It did not seem like any lightning flash of com-

prehension that came to her, but just a gradual development of natural light.

'She could do no other,' Bab declared, that light still flashing in her eyes, a flash coming again upon her olive-tinted cheek. It was night now, the world about her was all asleep. But the little Ildy was not well, and needed that Bab should walk up and down the cottage floor with her till long past midnight. Barbara was all patience, all kindness for the suffering baby; but yet to-night her burning thought was of the tale she had been told.

'She could do no other than she has done,' Bab said to herself. 'They'd surrounded her, overpowered her, and she had yielded. Then she saw what she had done, and knew there was only one way out of it. And that way she has taken, never heeding what the end may be! And as for *him*, Mr. Aldenmede, him that went beyond the seas ever so long ago, he'll never know. Perhaps it's better so. He can never know the wickedness a wicked world can invent. . . . But, oh! was there nobody to spend their inventions

on but her and him, two of the best and purest that ever lived? Was there none but *them*?

While Barbara was spending her indignation thus, the gossips of the Bight, and far beyond the Bight, were finding sufficient food for the slander they revelled in. There is no need to write here the low taunts, the spiteful accusations of hypocrisy. It is sufficient to say that perhaps no man or woman, upon whose lips the slander dwelt, would not have grieved, and bitterly, compassionately, had they been able to enter into the heart of the suffering Thorhilda Theyn was enduring even while they spoke.

'The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit.'

To how many thousands have these words given comfort! To how many thousands have they seemed as if specially written for them!

'A broken spirit!' To have nothing left but that; nothing, in all the world nothing, but a heart, a spirit broken with the sense of its own sin, its own error, its own mistake, its own life-long short-coming, and to know that even that seemingly-wrecked soul may be

accepted of God! Oh, where shall one find words wherewith to recognise, but ever so feebly, that magnificent mercy!

When all is done, all lost—when hope itself lies dead in the heart; to know that even then this broken and contrite spirit will be accepted of Him who sits upon the Great White Throne, accepted as a sacrifice of value—to have this knowledge is to be lost as much in wonder as in gratitude.

Not at once may the broken in heart and soul dare to lift eyes of hope and thankfulness. Had we no other guide but instinct we should remain prostrate, penitent, 'submitting,' as Bishop Jeremy Taylor says, 'to such sadness as God sends on us; patiently enduring the Cross of Sorrow which He sends as our punishment.'

Hope as we will, pray as we may, it can never be other than an agony to pass through this strait gate of repentance. The soul that passes easily may suspect itself from the beginning.

Yet the Slough of Despond is not of the same depth to each of us. It is the man or woman who has sinned against light, in the

midst of light, who must suffer the more keenly for having chosen darkness.

Thorhilda Theyn, kneeling that night in a strange room, in a stranger's home—alone and lonely, saddened, stricken, yearning, repentant, had no cry but one—that cry she uttered in the lowliest, the most utter self-abasement.

‘My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?’

Not long did she kneel there in the chill silence before an answer came.

‘Forsaken *thee*? Ah, no; I gave My life for thee. I strove to constrain thee by My Love—My Love alone! How often have I urged it upon thee, this Love of Mine, by how many ways! By the softness and ease of life I urged it; by the sweetness of human love and friendship I urged it; by the contrast of the pain and loneliness of other lives I urged it. In the stars of the midnight sky I spoke; in the flowers of the spring-time I whispered; each rustling leaf, each dew-bright petal, was a plea! . . . Forsake thee! . . . Never did I leave thy side for one moment!

‘No; I stood at the door of thy heart and knocked, but in vain.

‘My knocking was heard; but it was not answered.

‘Not in so many words didst thou make to Me the old reply, “Come again at a more convenient season,” but such was the answer thy life made to Me. The result is at hand.’

Yet the tear-blinded, heart-broken woman knelt on. Though no comfort came, no help, she would yet remain where alone comfort could be.

And again, and ever again, came the cry:

‘My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?’

CHAPTER L.

‘AT YOUR SOFT TOUCH OF PITY LET ME WEEP.’

‘Experience is like the stern-lights of a ship at sea, and illuminates only the track we have passed over.’

COLERIDGE.

‘HAPPINESS, dear ! Is that the rock on which you have been stranded ?’

The speaker was a woman, young-looking for her age ; and, without consideration, one would add, beautiful.

It was not a face that people felt inclined to analyse. The expression of goodness, of quietness, of reserved strength, was of that unobtrusive kind which people accept without question. Few who knew Margaret Thurstone, and had a trouble, could help confiding in her ; though she did not always make such confidence quite easy. Her tendency being toward reticence, she had naturally a dread of

the unguarded and unrestrained outpourings of others.

To-night she had had no fear; no strain had been put upon her forbearance. From first to last she had listened to the story Thorhilda Theyn had told with interest, with sympathy; yet with a growing wonder that a woman whose instincts were evidently pure and good, whose principles were upright, whose outlook over men and things was both clear and wide—that one apparently so irreproachable could yet have been so blinded, could yet have been permitted to fall so far from her own first estate as to be now lying, so to speak, in the very dust, with ashes of humiliation on a head that had always been held, perhaps unconsciously, a little proudly above its fellows. Certainly it was not quite easy to see beyond and behind this strange and sad complication.

Mrs. Thurstone's life had been lived in the world. Though her means were now narrow, her way of living straitened, she had many friends who did not forget that she was the daughter of an admiral, the widow of a cavalry officer who had fallen in the Crimea.

She herself at that time had not been twenty years of age ; her husband had not completed his thirtieth winter.

Her life since then had been not only pure and blameless, but those alone who were privileged to watch it closely knew of the ceaseless self-sacrifice, the untiring devotion with which she gave her time, her strength, and such means as she had, to the service of such as were yet poorer than herself. Her name was not in the newspapers, she sat on no committees, she organized no new and popular ways of being philanthropic. Yet it may be that she dared to think prayerfully of a time when she would hear the words, '*I was an hungered, and you gave Me meat.*'

Still, as it has been intimated, her life was not one of social seclusion. Her society was too much valued by such as understood for that to be possible. And so it was that she was able to estimate to the full the gravity of the thing that Thorhilda Theyn had done. A woman less conversant with the way of the modern world might have underrated the matter altogether ; indeed, it is probable that Miss Theyn had a little hoped to be consoled

by hearing some words that should betray that a lighter and easier view might be taken ; but if so her hope was disappointed.

Margaret Thurstone's memory was good ; her affection enduring. Though so many years had passed since she had counted Squire Theyn's dead wife among her friends—a friend older than herself by fourteen years, and possibly weaker in some ways, yet a woman so loving, so gentle, so full of all sweet human kindness that her memory could never be recalled without a sigh—though all this had been so long ago, Mrs. Thurstone had received the daughter of her dead friend almost without surprise, and certainly without regret.

It was chiefly from her Aunt Averil that Thorhilda had heard of Mrs. Thurstone ; and though she had heard so little, that little had always been of a nature to lead her to conclude that her mother's friend would be likely to be the friend of anyone in real trouble. So it was that in that hour of desperation her mind had been drawn to dwell with some hope upon the possibility of finding a refuge in the small house in Strafford Park where

Mrs. Thurstone lived ; and drawn so strongly that no other alternative seemed to present itself.

She had not regretted. Rather had the thought forced itself upon her mind that even in this hour of apparent rebellion a Guiding Hand had been over her. Certainly she had prayed for guidance, but it was with her as with most of us : we are astonished, somewhat appalled, when a prayer is directly and visibly answered.

Some hours had now passed since that twilight hour when Thorhilda had presented herself at Mrs. Thurstone's door, pale, chilled, silent, yet with a look of supplication so evident on her beautiful face, that even before she had made herself known she had been made to feel most warmly welcome.

‘ Do sit down here, by the fire, please ! ’ the hostess had urged in a kind, homely way. The cabman had been dismissed, tea ordered, the lamp turned to its fullest light, the fire stirred to its brightest blaze, and all before the stranger's name was asked.

It was hardly needful to ask it, so strong was the resemblance between Thorhilda Theyn

and her dead mother. Mrs. Thurstone felt no surprise, showed none, nor yet any curiosity.

‘ You shall tell me all when you have had some tea. Forgive me for saying that I know you have something to tell me—some trouble. Well, whatever it is, my life has been one long preparation for it, and without doubt He Who has prepared me has led you here.’

And now, at nearly midnight, all was told—told from the very beginning. The first weeks of doubt, of irresolution, the first dawning of trouble, the strong temptation, the almost overwhelming pressure, the dread alternative—all was laid bare ; made so clear that the girl felt as if she had never seen her own position, her own place in the pitiful drama, before. Yet she was far from pitying herself ; that was reserved for Mrs. Thurstone to do. All her own feeling was of the nature of blame.

And after this came the history of the way in which light had come at last ; at least light enough to prevent the consummation of such a disaster as had doubtless led to a wreck even more terrible than this stranding on a strange rock in mid-ocean.

As a matter of course Damian Aldenmede's name was mentioned, and this with such effort, such betrayal, such evident suffering, as was sufficiently convincing.

Margaret Thurstone did not hear the artist's name for the first time, as she hastened to say, hating all concealments, all semblance of mystery, and useless suppression of simple fact.

'I know Mr. Aldenmede,' she said at once. 'I have known him many years.'

'Did you know that he was at Ulvstan Bight ?'

'Yes ; I helped in recommending him to go there — or at least to the north coast. He needed bracing, time for recruiting after the work he had done in the east of London.'

'I thought he had been much abroad ?'

'So he had ; but that was earlier in his life — I mean it was before his East End work. . . . It was just after his sorrow—his most crushing sorrow.'

There was silence in the little room for a time. Mrs. Thurstone, silenced by reminiscences, sat looking into the fire, her patient,

thoughtful, beautiful face the more beautiful for its expression of rapt musing.

The face opposite to hers, though, perhaps, strictly speaking, the lovelier of the two, and by far the younger, was yet at the present moment the less attractive to look upon. Keen, overpowering, remorseful sorrow is seldom altogether winning.

'Could you tell me of Mr. Aldenmede's trouble?' Thorhilda asked at last, speaking with a strange timidity.

Margaret Thurstone paused a moment before answering.

'There is no valid reason, none at all, why I should not tell you all I know,' she replied presently. 'But I think it would not be very wise to tell you to-night.'

Thorhilda had no strength left wherewith to beseech for the knowledge she so earnestly desired to have. Personal grief will impair the strongest curiosity, and there is nothing like sorrow for softening the tone of even the most argumentative.

Very skilfully Mrs. Thurstone turned the conversation back to Thorhilda's own trouble. It was not a difficult thing to do.

‘And you had no plan in coming here, dear?’ she said kindly. ‘No especial idea about your future?’

‘Nothing very clear,’ the girl replied, forcing the hot tears back. ‘I knew that you were working amongst the poor. I thought that perhaps I might help you; but then——’ (this came with extreme difficulty) ‘but then, how shall I live? . . . I have no money, no talent. . . . What can I do?’

In Mrs. Thurstone’s own mind there was the certainty that Miss Theyn would very soon go back to the Rectory at Yarburgh; but she had too much tactful sympathy to say so at present. One thing, however, she must say.

‘I think I understood that you had not left your address, or any clue to your present whereabouts, at Yarburgh?’ she asked in a studiously matter-of-fact tone.

But Thorhilda’s conscience heard reproach where none was.

‘I could not—no, I could not! Besides, for *their* sakes—for the sake of my uncle and aunt—I thought it better not, far better. . . . Believe me!’ the girl besought earnestly.

‘Believe me, I weighed the matter all round, thought of things on the one side and on the other ; and, knowing that blame could fall upon me alone, I judged it better to do what I have done. Had I left an address, it would but have seemed like an invitation to—to them to follow me, to persuade me—to persuade me to do what I had solemnly promised to do, and that after weeks, months—nay, I may almost say years of indecision.’

‘Forgive me for interrupting you ; but that all points to a too narrow environment. A month in a wider social atmosphere would have shown you your own mind.’

‘Perhaps so,’ Thorhilda replied ; ‘but all the same, I ought to have known my own mind as matters stood—or at any rate *I should have more clearly recognised the fact that I did not know it.*’

There was another pause.

The fire was yet burning with a subdued glow of cheerfulness ; the sleet now and then dashed upon the window-panes ; the wind was moaning sadly in the casement. Above its passing moan came the words, uttered slowly, firmly, solemnly :

‘*He that followeth Me walketh not in darkness.*’

‘I believe *that*—I believe it with all my heart, with all my soul,’ Thorhilda answered, while the hot tears dropped on her cheek. . . . ‘Yet, *yet* it seems hard to follow when the leading points only to pain—only to suffering.’

‘To what *seems* pain. . . . Can you not trust? Can you not *see* that all such sorrow is certainly turned into joy, as He promised it should be? While the other way—the wider way—with all its flowers and all its joys, quite as certainly leads on to darkness, and to pain, and to bitterness and to misery. . . . Oh! when—*when* will human beings believe that Christ brought light upon their human path, that *He came to bring it*? . . . Oh, what, what is it in us—we *know*, we *see*, we *believe*, and we turn away, always meaning to come back to the narrower way some time. Meanwhile, path leads to path, flowers lead on to flowers. Then suddenly we awake—and all is thorns and darkness.’

‘Not suddenly—no, not suddenly,’ Thorhilda interposed; ‘we see it coming—the

darkness. We feel the touch of the thorns that are to wound so deeply. . . . and we turn away. To the last we turn—to the last the flowery way amuses us, distracts us, though all the while we see the end.’

‘Yet it is something—nay, much, that we do see it? Are you not glad that you see with open eyes at the present moment?’

‘Glad? . . . gladness for me? . . . sight for me?’ Thorhilda exclaimed in surprise. . . . ‘There is only one light—it is upon the past. . . . Is that enough for me? Is it enough for any human being?’

‘It is as much as the most of us get—and more than that: it is as much as the wisest people hope for. Believe me, the happiest state of all is a state of perfect trust—strong, hopeful trust that all will yet be well. That may seem like a platitude; but happy are the people whose lives can be best expressed by a succession of platitudes.’

‘How you repeat the word “happy!” To me, *now*, it is the deadest word of a dead language. . . . And yet, ah me! I remember one morning, not so long ago—it was but last spring, in fact—when I stood by the sea, a

blue, bright, sparkling sea, with a blue, bright, shining sky overhead, and spent my forenoon in wondering why I was so happy. . . . Is it possible that morning was not a year ago?’

‘And your mind dwelt all on happiness?’

‘All on happiness—in perfect gratitude—because I was so very happy. . . . And yet I did not understand it; and afterward I began to question it—then to place the unhappiness of others in a sort of balance, to weigh their patient, struggling, unselfish life against my own selfish and self-seeking one.’

‘And the result?’

‘The result was simply dissatisfaction.’

‘It should have gone deeper than that.’

‘It has gone deeper now—*too late*!’

‘Too late? And you not yet twenty-three!’

‘Age has little to do with it. A vessel shipwrecked on its first voyage or the last—where is the difference to the drowned crew—the hull upturned upon the barren rock? Shipwreck is shipwreck, when the vessel is wrecked utterly. And the analogy holds good—a human life wrecked at twenty or at sixty, what matters! The few years are nothing!’

'Pardon me! They are everything, as you will yet see. But I will not speak of that now. I want to help you more closely, more surely; and to do that I must see what your present wishes are. And let me say, once for all, how glad I am, how grateful, that you should have had such trust in me as to come here and let me help you as best I may—it is even flattering, though I know you do not mean it for that. Let that idea go with some others. It is late now; but even before I sleep I would like to have some idea of what I can do for you. . . . First, in the early morning, I must send a telegram to Canon Godfrey.'

'You must do that?'

'Yes, certainly. Think of him—the torture of uncertainty he is undergoing!'

But when Mrs. Thurstone looked up, Miss Theyne was not thinking. She was lying back in her easy-chair, white, pallid, unconscious.

'How thoughtless I have been—how very thoughtless!' Mrs. Thurstone said, reproaching herself. 'I forgot her sleepless night, her long journey, her terrible anxiety. . . . Oh me, when will one learn to be human?'

CHAPTER LI.

‘WHEN HOPE LIES DEAD.’

‘O friend, I know not which way I must look
For comfort, being as I am, opprest.’

WORDSWORTH.

THE snow was still falling, the wind still wailing up the narrow suburban street. Indoors, lamps were being lighted and curtains drawn, though it was yet but three in the afternoon. People were glad to make believe that the night had come, or rather the evening—the long, bright, warm, English winter’s evening—not the least favourable time for discovering and enjoying the peculiar happiness of English home-life — a life that has a flavour all its own, and only to be discovered after acquaintance with life as it is lived elsewhere.

It is not to be wondered over that happy

English people should return to the scene of their happiness—a little vain, a little supercilious perhaps—and as a rule, very well contented ; the latter is not the least of the good effects produced by change of scene.

Canon Godfrey had known what it was to spend a winter abroad, to shiver in the marble corridors of Florentine palaces, to linger on the sunny side of the street so long as there was a warm ray to tempt him, then to go indoors to a carpetless room—to walls glittering with mirrors, and gilding, and faded frescoes. Somewhere there would be a big white china stove—very handsome, perhaps—but being so very unfamiliar, would certainly also be unattractive, and less equal to the task of persuading him of its use than of its architectural beauty.

The Canon was a man sufficiently sensitive to such things ; and being given—far more than the world about him at Yarburgh knew—to testing himself, his strength of soul, by various self-denials and asceticisms, he had come to know how very keen was his appreciation of what people call domestic comfort. A man who had simply gone on taking life as

it came, enjoying all his meals with no more than the ordinary restraint prescribed by social usage, who had indulged in the luxuries of fire and warm clothing whenever these might seem to be needed, who had accepted all the services and attentions common to his position without question—such a one would have known far less of himself, of his own weakness, than the Canon knew; would have suffered far less from strife before his falls, or what he counted such, and from compunction afterward. And whatever may be said for or against the view he took, and the things done and suffered in consequence of that view, this at least is certain, he kept his inner life most certainly alive, his soul's life was at least as vivid as his outer life.

Was this double existence the reason—or one reason, why his life was being lived so rapidly?

He did not know how rapidly it was going. Suspicion had passed away with the momentary sense of physical failure that gave it birth.

Yet now and again suspicion returned—never causelessly.

This afternoon, travelling between London and Peterborough, he knew that there had been a time of oblivion—‘the oblivion of sleep,’ some might have suggested; but though ordinary sleep may undoubtedly cause a man’s pulse to beat more faintly, it does not so impair the action of his heart that the pulse ceases altogether, and only resumes its working after a very convulsion of the forces of nerve and brain.

The Canon, coming to himself after such a moment, recognised once more all that had happened — and the recognition was made with most reverential wonder.

‘How many times will it be thus?’ he asked himself. ‘How much of nerve-force is there in me, to enable me to fight with death thus and overcome?’

‘It is not my doing—this returning. . . . In my powerless brain there is no effort—no desire. . . . Life strives with death; and so long as God wills life will overcome. . . . Some day—it may be soon—there will come the moment when God will decree that the strife shall end otherwise. . . . And I . . . I do not murmur. I do not dread that

moment—not with more than the ordinary human and natural dread of the unknown! Were it not for others, I should be even glad to go.’

He did not, even to himself, admit the fact that it was these same ‘others’ who had so largely taken the joy, the strength, from his past life, who were so certainly helping to make him weary of the present.

Naturally his thought turned almost at once to the niece of whom he had been thinking all day—nay, for many days. Not once had a reproach darkened his desire to meet her again—to console her. It may be that he alone knew the depth of her great need for consolation. Others might blame—doubtless were blaming, even then; but even upon this blame of others Hugh Godfrey was not drawn to dwell.

Love itself does not always enable people to understand, to exonerate the one beloved. There must be something beyond—and that something is the divine love which is named charity. ‘It is charity that beareth all things; hopeth all things; and charity never faileth.’

‘I *will* be gentle . . . and passing gentle,’

the fierce Sir Balin resolved within himself at a moment of somewhat fierce temptation. And because his word is so simple and natural we know it will be kept.

Hugh Godfrey’s resolve was of a different nature.

It was a holy thought brought to his memory by the sudden sight of a cup embossed with a simple spiritual scene, that enabled the knight in the poem to overcome. It was a holy thought, brought to his mind by a book carried always in his pocket, that enabled Canon Godfrey to confront a weighty moment with the strength and calmness he desired. The chapter in the little book was entitled ‘OF FAMILIAR FRIENDSHIP WITH JESUS.’ And the first words of the chapter were these :

‘When Jesus is present, all is well, and nothing seems difficult; but when Jesus is absent, everything becomes hard.’

‘*When Jesus is present,*’ Canon Godfrey repeated to himself at the moment when most he needed the strength of the idea. So that afterward the hour seemed far from having been one of supreme difficulty.

Mrs. Thurstone's little room was bright and cheerful. She herself was quieter than usual in her manner—this by reason of the force of her strong sympathy. Thorhilda rose to her feet with a little cry that had in it as much of pleasure as of pain. The Canon's kiss on her forehead, calm and tender and full of all forgiveness, was what she expected, not what she deserved. Margaret Thurstone could not help some wonder, perhaps even some slight touch of enviousness. Her own life was so lone ; it had been lonely so long. Yet it was not of herself that she was consciously thinking. The Canon's face, the pain written there, the long-suffering, could not be hidden from one who had herself suffered so deeply. Ah ! how could anyone cause fresh sorrow, fresh wounding to a man so good, so generous as this man seemed to be ? And all too surely this new event must be a terrible thing in his sight. For awhile she left the uncle and niece alone ; and the first few moments were passed in silence, save for the sound of subdued weeping.

‘I will let her cry for awhile,’ he had said

to himself as he sat there by his niece, holding her hot, tremulous hand in his own. Then, all unawares, his own tears began to fall; and Thorhilda, seeing this, knew misery more bitter than any she had known yet.

'Uncle Hugh! Uncle Hugh!' she cried passionately, falling at his feet as she spoke; 'I cannot bear this—I cannot.'

'No, my child,' he replied; 'I do not wonder that you cannot, since these are probably the first tears you have caused anyone to shed since you were born. . . . Forgive them; and believe this—they are tears of gladness quite as much as of sorrow. And the sorrow is as much for you as for myself—nay, more. All day I have been thinking of what you must have suffered in secret before—before you took such a step as this. . . . Thorda, Thorda, how was it that you could not confide in me? How was it? Could you think for one moment that even undue persuasion would be used? Could you think that, in a matter so important as your marriage, we should wish to influence you in the least degree in any direction to which your own inclination was opposed?

I cannot understand—no, even yet I cannot understand!’

There was no reproach in his tone, but the pain was unmistakable, and it was some time before any answer could be made.

‘I cannot understand myself, Uncle Hugh,’ the girl said, with sobs and tears. ‘I cannot comprehend *now* how I could be tempted by mere external things so far. But I *was* tempted—tempted to sell my soul—it was nothing less than that, that I might be the mistress of Ormston Magna. *That* was my dream. Of myself, as Mr. Meredith’s wife, I would not and could not think—not until it was too late. Then it was forced upon me. The letters of congratulation, the sayings that dropped from people’s lips—nay, the very books and newspapers that I read, there was a time when everything seemed to force upon me all that married life, *without love*, really meant. But all too late. I looked about for some way of escape. I thought of it night and day till my brain would think no more. . . . I did not think at last. . . . It seemed to be some one else who was listening to your sermon, some one else

within me, yet not in sympathy with me—with what I was about to do—who said: “These words are for you: it is you who are exchanging your soul, selling it for the mess of pottage that is offered to you in the guise of wealth, and ease, and luxury. Take it, and it shall be dust and ashes in your mouth, and you shall find no place of repentance—no, not though you seek it carefully with tears.”’

Another time of silence passed, but it was sufficiently eloquent silence. The girl felt all the forgiveness, all the comprehension, all the compassion she so greatly needed. Yet there was weight and heart-ache and dread behind.

It was she who spoke first.

‘Don’t let us talk more of the past than is needful, Uncle Hugh,’ she entreated. ‘You do forgive me all that I have done—the pain I have caused you, the disgrace?’

‘Forgive, my child! . . . Yes, as I hope to be forgiven. . . . Do you quite forgive me?’

‘For what?’

‘For want of insight—nay, for worse than

that. . . . Let me confess once for all, that I wished that you might care for Percival Meredith ; that I wished to see you there, at Ormston, happy, free from care, in a position you seemed created to fill. Doubt dawned upon me very slowly. The words I said in the church were said half against my will. They were not my own words. I spoke them to you, and you know that I did, but I was compelled to speak them.'

'I knew it. . . . I knew also that you could not have said them privately.'

'You felt that?'

'Intimately. . . . And now again, let me ask you to think more of what is to be. . . . I have been thinking of it—thinking ceaselessly, intensely. And now I trust my way is clear.'

'It is quite clear to me.'

Thorhilda's face, the sudden change in the expression of it, showed that she apprehended the idea that was in her uncle's mind. .

'*What* is clear to you?' she asked, in altered tones.

'That you must return to Yarrowburgh with me to-morrow.'

Again there was a long pause, more weighty, more troubled than before.

‘You have thought of *that*—you have even considered it possible! . . . Oh, Uncle Hugh!’

‘Do not think that I am speaking selfishly, still less carelessly. . . . Believe me, I have thought out the matter on every side. Do what we will, there will be pain for you, pain for me. I am persuaded that what I urge will be for the best in every way.’

And then with clearness, with eloquence even, with affection, the Canon went on to unfold his views.

Miss Theyn listened, wishing passionately to be convinced. To return to the Rectory—to the one home she had known and loved with the love of the untravelled, the inexperienced, was the one bright vision she had.

But instinct, strong within her, spoke unpalatable truths. ‘If you return *now*,’ it said, ‘you will draw down upon those who are dearest to you the odium, the gossip, the scandal of a whole neighbourhood with fresh acrimony. Remain here, devote your-

self to some high and noble work, thus proving your repentance, and inevitably you will regain for yourself, and for others, the belief in your integrity which is the secret of all force in the nerves of the social life of each one of us. Unhappily for you, you have let in the air of suspicion. The work of reducing it must be the work of years ; and that work will be best done away from the scene of your fall. It would be presuming upon power that you have not to return at the present moment.'

Thus convinced herself—though all against her desire—it was impossible but that this erring and suffering woman's language should be all-convincing. Canon Godfrey could only bow his head in token of his sorrowful yielding.

'I will come back again, Uncle Hugh ; do not fear but that I shall come back—but not now ; it cannot be now. And when I do, we must be prepared. My coming back will have much pain in it—double pain for me, because I must bear yours as well as my own. Even yet I do not comprehend all that I must suffer. The heart-searching, the re-

pentance that must come before myself can be restored to myself, will alone show me the strife of the days to be. And much of that suffering must be in enduring the judgment of others ; righteous judgment, doubtless, but not the less difficult to bear. Yet it must be borne : even I, with all my inexperience, know that. Look at the greater biographies of our own literature. Does Shelley’s splendid poetry cover his cruelty to Harriet Westbrook ? Is Carlyle’s domestic misery quite lost sight of—as it ought to be—when we look at the shelves groaning under the work of a long, and suffering, and resolute life ? No, Uncle Hugh. Once, long ago, you preached a sermon on retribution, and in that sermon you quoted these words :

“As every body hath its shadow, so every sin hath its punishment.”

The words struck me then, when no very definite sin had cast its shadow over my soul. Now they seem as if they might have been written for me, and for me only.’

The Canon listened, with sorrow enough, but also with comprehension.

‘Tell me,’ he said at last—‘tell me the details of your plan. I suppose you are intending to help Mrs. Thurstone in some work of hers?’

‘Yes; Mrs. Thurstone is willing to teach me, if it be possible for me to remain with her, or rather in the Infirmary where she spends so much of her life. . . . I have everything to learn.’

The Canon understood. Here was a chance for him to make it impossible; but his soul was not low enough of stature to enable him to pass by ways like this.

He could only silently watch his niece for awhile. ‘Everything to learn!’ Did she know all that her own word included? Did she, who had never known what it was to be called in the morning before her own bell rang, who had been accustomed to retire at any hour in the evening when she might feel fatigued—did she even dream of what it might be to sit all night, night after night, in the ward of a hospital? Had she any save the most vague idea of what the life of a professional nurse must be? Had she taken account of the weariness, the disgust, the

painful sights and sounds to which she must become accustomed, before she could be of the smallest use?

He knew that she had not—that she had no data to go upon which would enable her to arrive at the conclusions that were disturbing his own vision of her chosen future. Chosen?—no, as he knew too well, it was a future from which every nerve was recoiling with a dread little short of anguish.

His affection, never greater than now, his intimate knowledge of the girl, so wrought upon and within him, that his anguish was no less than hers. And all the while his heart was crying out against the idea of his lonely return, of the loneliness of the days to be. His wife was there at Yarburgh, awaiting him—true. And her loneliness, her unhappiness, would be added to the weight of his own.

You cannot take a dog or bird to your heart, keep it there for years, and then lose it, but you shall find an aching gap. How much keener the aching when you wake to miss a sympathetic human being, one who has loved you, trusted to you for everything, rested

upon your thought, your energy, your providence, for everything that you were glad to give, and that other heart was glad to receive ! Such wrenchings asunder are amongst the bitterest and most abiding pains humanity can know.

The words of the wisest consoler are fewest in the presence of such sorrow as this. So Mrs. Thurstone felt when the moment of parting came. She stood by, yet a little apart, till the last. Then she came forward.

‘Will you leave your niece to me, Canon Godfrey? Will you trust me, believing that I will do my best for her?’

The words were uttered in that peculiar voice, every intonation of which tells of the long chastening of sorrow ; and beside that, there was the gentle charm of the gentlest womanhood.

‘Can I trust you?’ he asked, in a broken way, full of all effort. ‘The question is, can I thank you? I feel that I cannot.’

Mrs. Thurstone smiled.

‘You know how little one needs to be thanked,’ she said. ‘How is it that words are

so inadequate—that—that other things are so much?’

‘Ah!’ the Canon replied; ‘how is it, indeed? We know nothing yet, nothing of each other, nothing of the language we employ, nothing of the significance of every look, every glance, every gesture. We know all about the internal economy of every beehive in the land, every ant’s nest, every fish’s pebble-and-weed constructed bridal-bower. Of ourselves we know nothing—nothing but this, that one day we *shall* know.’

Was it the light of that other day that was in his eyes as he went out? The look on his face was calm, resolute, as if he had determined that all sadness should be subdued. There were no last words; the final parting was brief, silent. Miss Theyn went to her own room to shed her tears in silence, and they were very bitter. Did she yet comprehend all that she had done?

CHAPTER LII.

‘SHALL WE SEE TO IT, I AND YOU?’

‘He looked at her as a lover can ;
She looked at him as one who awakes ;
The past was a sleep, and her life began.’

ROBERT BROWNING.

It often happens in this bleak north country of ours that we have a glorious foretaste of spring some time in the month of February. Soft rains fall, the grass looks greener, the skies look bluer, the air all at once grows soft and warm as any air of June. And how one rejoices in it while it lasts, coming, as it usually does, between two severe winters! The winter to come, as we know too well, will be almost as long as the winter gone, and certainly as chill. Invalids venture out into sunny valleys, the tenderest infants are taken abroad; young and old seem to rejoice as if something had happened of a nature

peculiarly pleasurable. And all this because the sun shines and the air is warm. Do we even now clearly recognise how certainly cold and dulness are of the nature of pain?

The lanes between Yarburgh and Ormston Magna are very much like certain Devonshire lanes. They are narrow, uneven, and they lie between deep hedgerows that in summer are all luxuriant. Though they be brown and bare in winter, they have still a charm of their own, a charm not wanting in either form or colour. The last year's bramble-leaves turn crimson in the pale sun, or show touches of amber and russet, of gold and green; late grasses quiver; the hemlock seeds spread gray-white discs in the upper hedgerow, giving you a sky-line of wonderful picturesqueness. Then, too, the bare trees, in all their beauty of branching and curving, seem to claim new attention because of the sun-bright blue behind and above; and no patch of green, or gray, or cream-coloured lichen loses force for the need of light. It is on such days as these that we begin to recognise all that light must mean in the lands where light is a perpetual and natural

thing. And such light! Only the eyes that have wakened to the glory and intensity of the rays of southern suns can know all that we owe to the beneficence of light.

Yet a February day in England, such a day as we have spoken of, is not a time to be passed without enjoyment.

‘It is simply glorious!’ Miss Douglas was saying, in her clear, loud, yet most musical voice, to a gentleman she had met sauntering along Langrick Lane in the middle of a February afternoon. It may be that her voice was more musical than usual, the sparkle of her eyes brighter, the colour on her lip and cheek deeper and lovelier because the gentleman was Mr. Percival Meredith.

It had so happened that these two had not met since what was spoken of in certain circles as ‘the catastrophe.’

Perhaps it was not altogether so unsuitable a word as it might seem at first glance to a scholar to be. Without doubt, Miss Theyn’s flight from home was of the nature of ‘an overthrow,’ of ‘a great calamity,’ of ‘a violent convulsion’ in humanity if not in nature.

As a matter of course, by one name, or by another, the occurrence had been the great topic of conversation in the neighbourhood of Yarburgh ever since the fatal-seeming day on which it happened. And equally, as a matter of course, different people took different views of the affair. It was sad to note how few judged charitably.

Perhaps it might be sadder still to note how few suspended their judgment, how few refused to pronounce any final verdict at all. And it was significant that in nineteen cases out of twenty the blame was thrown solely upon Miss Theyn.

It seemed as if it were impossible that a man still young in a certain sense, undoubtedly handsome—'handsomer than ever,' so close observers were saying—and undoubtedly rich, it was impossible that any blame whatever should lie with one so favoured on every side. This may seem a crude way of stating the truth; but not Virgil himself, with his dainty ten lines a day, could add to the truthfulness.

Inevitably Miss Douglas understood; she had understood all along the line of this

strange and painful matter. And she knew Percival Meredith almost better than she knew herself. She had much in her favour.

‘It is simply glorious!’ she said, meeting Mr. Meredith in Langrick Lane, and swinging her crimson parasol with its deep border of cream-coloured lace behind her head, so that only the softest reflection of the soft February sun should lie upon her face. She was looking well, as she knew—a source of strength, even of genius, to the plainest woman in the world. Once be assured that you are looking your own best, and you have nothing to fear from the handsomest woman in your neighbourhood.

So much lies in consciousness—nay, much more than this. It is only when you get beyond being conscious at all that you can afford to forget, to ignore. By that time you have got beyond much else, much that can never trouble you, or gladden you again.

Gertrude Douglas was still in the time of gladness, of hope, of perturbation ; her manner betrayed all three.

Percival Meredith was not slow to understand. Something he had understood before

to-day. He replied to the rather gushing greeting of Miss Douglas with the air of well-bred calm she had so long admired. His dark eyes looked darker and more inscrutable than ever; his fine figure seemed taller, more compact. He had the demeanour of a man unembarrassed, disengaged, thoroughly master of himself.

'Yes, it is perfect weather for England,' he said, and Miss Douglas made quick reply.

'But I understood that you were not going to spend your spring in England. We were told that you were going to Rome.'

'Ah, so I have heard before! . . . Why Rome, I wonder? I have been there so often!'

'Then you had not thought of it?'

'Not for a moment.'

'You had not intended to leave home?'

'Not at present; certainly not. . . . Why should I?'

'Why should you?' Miss Douglas asked, shrugging her shoulders in a way that would have been pretty had her shoulders been lighter. 'Why should you, indeed? but

that everybody expected it of you. It was the only decent thing to be done.'

Percival Meredith was not quite unaccustomed to what is termed 'chaff'; nay, it said much for his education in that direction that he bore Miss Douglas's insinuations not only without wincing, but with a certain amount of enjoyment.

'I begin to comprehend,' he said, speaking with an affectation of faintness, exhaustion; yet this suggested, rather than overdone.

'You *begin* to comprehend! What have you been doing all this while?'

'What have I been doing? . . . Oh, well, various things! . . . I have had my portrait taken.'

'You have? . . . at this juncture? . . . What a confession! . . . For the next *fiancée*, I suppose?'

'Yes, for the next,' Mr. Meredith replied, still with the air of one striving against extreme over-fatigue. 'The next, or the one after that,' he added. 'Who can say?'

Miss Douglas laughed—a long, low, cheery, pleasant laugh—and Percival Meredith listened

with something more than amusement. Long ago he had noted, for his own private remembrance, how pleasant a laugh that of Gertrude Douglas would be for a man to have at his fireside whenever he should care to hear it! At this moment it seemed pleasanter than ever.

When Miss Douglas spoke again there was a decided change in the tone of her voice; it was gentler, more serious; her large, dark, beautiful eyes were dilated with a new interest, a new compassion in the expression of them. Never before had she been so winning. Percival Meredith felt his heart beating with a new emotion as he listened.

‘I am glad. I am *so* glad you are taking it all so beautifully;’ and there was genuine sympathy in her every accent. ‘Do forgive me,’ she continued. ‘I have thought so much of you, wondered how you would bear, how you would *really* bear; not how you *would* be seeming to keep up before the world: of *that* I had no fear; but of how you were enduring what I knew must be such sorrow! . . . Oh, I must say it — Thorda was my friend, *is* my friend, but she *was* cruel!’

For a moment, one silent undecided moment, Mr. Meredith's face wore a shade of sadness.

'You are right ; it was cruel,' he admitted. 'And it was gratuitous cruelty. Even then, at that last moment, Miss Theyn might have gained her freedom, if that was what she wanted, by steps less painful to me. . . . But there! you have betrayed me into breaking my resolve, my most strong resolve. I had not wished to mention that name to anyone.'

'How good of you ; and how wise! . . . But—but I am not "anyone," surely?'

'I believe that though you are Miss Theyn's friend, Miss Douglas, you yet have some feeling of friendship for me. I trust I may take so much consolation to myself.'

This was said so impressively, with so much meaning behind, that the rosy glow on Miss Douglas's face deepened to a sudden blush.

'If you will let me be your friend, *really* your friend, well, I can only say that my life will be happier than it has been for a long while. . . . It has not been too happy of late.'

Mr. Meredith paused, not startled, not amused, but wondering once more whither things were tending.

‘Then it is a compact,’ he said presently, meeting Miss Douglas’s rather anxious but still beautiful eyes as he spoke. ‘It is a compact. If I need a friend, or rather friendship, I am to look to you. And on your side, will you say the same?’

‘Indeed, I will, and gladly! . . . There is more I could say, but I will not now.’

‘No? Have I been thoughtless? Have I kept you standing here too long? Pardon me.’

‘Has it been long? Surely not? . . . But I will say “good-bye.”’

‘Say, rather, *au revoir*. I must see you again soon—very soon.’

* * * * *

So they parted, there in the white sunny lane. Gertrude Douglas was so happy, so hopeful, so excited in her hopeful happiness that, meeting Mrs. Kerne a quarter of an hour later, even that lady’s curt ungraciousness had no really subduing effect.

‘Tell me about dear Thorda?’ she had

begged in a manner even more effusive than usual. 'Do tell me all about her; *do* tell me she is happy.'

'You know as much of "dear Thorda" as I do; and in all likelihood a great deal more,' was Mrs. Kerne's brusque reply.

It was not Miss Douglas's way to take offence at anybody or anything. With more true skilfulness than she might have been supposed to possess, she smoothed down the too-obvious angles of the other's mood, and contrived to extract some information that she had really desired to have; for the two letters she had received from Thorhilda had both of them been too brief, too reticently sad, to be quite satisfying to one who had so keen a love of detail as Gertrude Douglas. Besides, if she had a genuine affection for anyone, that person was Thorhilda Theyn; and unquestionably her love had been strained of late.

Of course she still went to the Rectory, but less frequently than before. The Canon was still the same courteous and thoughtful host, but change had passed upon him. He was older-looking, sadder, more silent, and

though he did not wish to betray that the presence of his niece's most intimate friend was a pain to him, he could not quite hide the fact. Mrs. Godfrey made small pretence of hiding her feeling, her suffering. At first she had burst into tears every time Miss Douglas entered the house, and still she would sit quietly weeping over her embroidery, making no effort to check her abundant tears. Miss Douglas could bear much, but even for her the Rectory was not now attractive.

But after that February day her thought was less drawn to the Rectory. Disappointment had not taught her the unwisdom of hoping, of darting thought and hope far into the unknown future. Ah, well, life is not all disappointment ; and as the Italian proverb has it, 'The world is for him that has patience.'

CHAPTER LVIII.

‘ LOVE, HOPE, FEAR, FAITH, THESE MAKE
HUMANITY.’

‘ I dwell alone—I dwell alone, alone,
 Whilst full my river flows down to the sea,
Gilded with flashing boats
 That bring no friend to me :
O love-songs, gurgling from a hundred throats,
 O love-pangs, let me be.’

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

THAT spring was not an easy or a happy time for Barbara Burdas, yet the girl had never been more brave, more bright.

She hardly knew herself how much of the brightness was due to the presence of ‘Nan Tyas’s baby,’ as some people called it, others speaking of it as ‘Bab’s Ildy,’ which perhaps pleased her better. Bab was a true child-lover, and to feel the little one’s arms clinging about her neck, to watch the big blue eyes that looked into hers so wonderingly, so

gravely, to note the growing intelligence of the frequent smile—all this was as new inspiration in Bab's life, and caused her to double efforts that had certainly been sufficiently strenuous before.

But, then, effort had not been so greatly needed. Barbara was not now in the darkness she had once been in. She read all such books and papers and magazines as came in her way ; and as we all know, when once the appetite for reading is established, it seems as if, by some miracle, aliment more or less is provided, enough for the keeping up of the appetite, if not enough for its satisfaction. The post brought to Barbara such parcels as oft enough gave her happiness for a whole week or more—pure, untainted, sterling happiness. And now it was beginning to be more than this. She was already able to perceive that the world, or a sufficient portion of it, was awake to the fact that the British fisheries were decreasing ; were threatened by injury in the way of trawling ; by hurt in the way of fishing at harmful seasons, in unsuitable grounds. If writers were thus writing of these things, if

members of Parliament were thus speaking of them, then surely down even in such poor little homes as her own the results would be seen.

‘Ay, so they may,’ said old Ephraim, taking his pipe from his mouth, and knocking out the ashes with the slow deliberation he had used for so many, many years, performing the act always as if a little regret attached to it, a little solemnity. ‘So we may see the good on it—an’ yet, no, not *us*, not *me* for sartain; and mebbby not even you, Bab; no, nor Jack, nor Steve even; whoä can saäy; they’re that slow, them Parlyment foäks. They don’t do nothin’, so Ah’ve heärd said, till they’re fairly forced, an’ then it’s agin the graäin, so as it’s not done hearty, nor rightly, after all. Ah well! poor folks mon’t complain; ’t isn’t right as they should. Ah’ve heerd mah greet-gran’father saäy, him as died afore this centherry was born—Ah’ve heerd him saäy as ’twere a bad sign when poor folks began wi’ complainin’. An’ so Ah think, Bab; so Ah think! Ah never holds wi’ no complainin’!’

And Barbara smiled, and set her grand-

father's supper of boiled milk and bread on a little coarse creamy damask cloth, and raked the ashes of the coal fire together, and then threw in a little log of wood so that he might go to bed in all the comfort of warmth and satisfaction.

'I like to hear you say that, gran'father,' she said cheerfully, sitting down beside him, and taking her own supper; 'I like to hear you speak so; not as you did this morning. Why, you almost broke my heart!'

The old man, hearing his granddaughter's words, was visibly affected. He put down his spoon, turned a little in his chair, and rested his poor old head upon his hand, as if a sudden aching had rendered it insupportable. Unhappily, Barbara understood it all, understood his wishing to be cheery and bright. And yet she had touched upon a point better avoided. It is those who seldom make mistakes of this kind who suffer most when sudden indiscretion betrays them.

'An' *there!* I've done it again,' she cried, kneeling down upon the brick floor, and putting her uplifted hands upon the old man's knees. 'I've been foolish an' thoughtless

again. But I never meant it, gran'father ; I never did. I thought as how you'd only been depressed this morning when you talked of going to sea again ; of leavin' the place where you've stayed now this thirty years an' never dreaming of leavin' it no more. I know you haven't ; an' therefore, oft enough when I've been straitened for the rent—or worse still, for the rate—I've never let you know for fear it might unsettle you. These are terrible times, I know ; though I've done my best that noan under this roof save myself should know quite how terrible they were. If milk's been scarce, and butter scarcer yet, why we've never known the need of a loaf of bread ; an' if the tea's been weak at times, why we've always had a bit left in the caddy. An' all round us there's been folk so much worse off than we are ; nay, I doubt if some of them's touched the bottom yet. I know more than I care to say, gran'father, an' I don't wish to say no more. No ! I'll go on doin' the very best I can, only so as you'll go on too ; just putting up with things ; taking the soup when it isn't much to speak of, an' not mindin' when the butter won't go on to the end of the

week—just bein' patient, as you've allus been. Say you will, gran'father? My heart's ached all day with the few words you let drop this morning. . . . You didn't mean them, did you?'

The old man was trembling, a tear or two dropped over his poor withered cheeks, but he tried to put away Bab's fears as well as he could without making any definite promise.

'We'll see, honey; we'll see!' he replied, turning to the table again, and pretending to care greatly for his supper.

Barbara was not deceived.

The next few days were passed as people pass the time in a house when one is threatened with some fatal illness. No word was spoken willingly that might even lead to the dreaded topic. Naturally this made a kind of strain, only discernible by the increased gentleness of deed and word; the continued and sensitive consciousness of the love that existed, and seemed to be growing—tenderly and sadly growing because of fear and pain. What would the end be?

All Barbara's other troubles seemed to sink under this for the time being. It was a long

while now since she had seen Hartas Theyn. One evening, sauntering to the cliff-top in the twilight, with little Ildy in her arms, she had met him suddenly in the cleft between the rocks where the beck came tumbling down to the sea over the rough boulders. He was looking very pale for a man who was now, as Barbara knew, literally working on a farm from morn till night. Canon Godfrey had told her of how he had offered to help the Squire's son to begin life afresh in some other direction.

‘ But he is wise, very wise.’ the Canon said, speaking with a warmth and emphasis that had been conspicuously absent from his words and ways of late. ‘ Hartas is doing the best thing he could do in devoting himself heart and soul to the only kind of work he knows anything about. And he is not sparing himself. It is true that he has every incentive. . . .’

Then the Canon stopped suddenly. In speaking of incentives he had in his mind the encumbered condition of the Squire's estate ; the possibility that hard work and carefulness, with some knowledge, some forethought,

might do much to bring again some of the old prosperous state of things upon which the owners of Garlaff had presumed so long. But then another idea made him pause, and then add, with meaning :

‘Every inducement but one : that one would perhaps have been the strongest of all! . . . I am proud of him that he is trying to live as if it were his!’

Barbara understood, as the Canon saw, but she was not the happier for that brief interview. Perhaps the fact that during absence, during silence, during much loneliness, with pain of many kinds, Barbara’s love had gone on growing, her regard deepening, perhaps this very fact prevented her views from changing, as she knew that Hartas was waiting for them to change.

Did he know, did he dream, did anyone dream of the terrible hours of terrible temptation through which the girl had to pass? Yet she had not wavered, and Hartas was quick to see that she had not. He seemed very calm outwardly ; still the surprise of seeing Barbara had naturally caused him some perturbation. Instinctively he raised his hat,

and might even have passed on, but that Bab was blushing and stopping, as if expecting that she must stay to speak all against her will.

It was like a meeting between strangers, so great was the change, so marked and certain the growth on either side. It is not always that love will stand such alterations.

'No change, no change ! Not but time's added grace
May blend and harmonize with its compeers.

* * * * *

But 'tis a change, and I detest all change,
And most a change in aught I loved long since.'

So Paracelsus spoke, nay speaks (that is the best of the friends that live between the covers of the books on our shelves ; they do not cease to speak save when we cease to listen) ; so said the suffering man to whom even the most natural changes in the life of his woman-friend were intolerable. So we say, many of us ; and as we speak we know the love is dead, the friendship cold.

But if there be a root to the matter, a true root planted rather in the rock of eternal verity than in the shifting sand of passing emotion, then no change can hurt the love so

growing ; for change must mean advance, and such advance must mean an ever-increasing attractiveness. There is no security for human affection like to that which is planted in Divine love.

If men and women who are of the earth earthy be drawn to such as show that some small ray of the light that never was on sea or land has penetrated into their soul, how shall it be with such as are praying always that the same light may be vouchsafed to themselves ?

Only a few words were exchanged, and these quite common-place ; yet the meeting was not without its effect upon the future.

'I will go on waiting,' Hartas said to himself as he went homeward to the Grange. And Bab, returning with heavier step to the Forecliff, said—

'More than ever I see I was right. How he's changed ! It's hardly himself ! . . . A man such as he is now to marry a bait-gatherer !'

Then on that painful string the sad music of her thought paused awhile. And the next variations had each one a refrain, and it was this :

‘ Yet, after all, will anyone ever love him more ? will anyone ever be to him all that I might have been ? . . . Oh me ! *How I could have loved him !*’

And ever and again through all the strain of poverty and fear of want, and dread of parting, for ever came that cry, ‘ *How I could have loved him !*’

Naturally enough no one dreamed how it was with Barbara. The painful episode in the history of the Rector’s niece had drawn all attention, all speculation to itself. Few cared to remember that once upon a time the Squire’s son had fallen in love with a ‘ flither-picker,’ had suffered something that was almost death because of her ; and, finally, had owed his life to her. That was the end ; and it had happened months ago.

CHAPTER LIV.

OLD EPHRAIM.

‘Weepeth he ?

Some sobbing weep, some weep and make no sound.’

‘ARE ya’ tired, honey?—are ya’ more tired nor ushal?’ the old man asked, as Bab came up the slope of the Forecliff, her baby in one arm asleep and smiling, and a skepful of brash* in the other.

Bab looked up a little wonderingly as she answered that she was not particularly weary. Words of endearment had always come from her grandfather’s lips so rarely, so unready, that she hardly ever heard them without suspicion ; and there was something more this evening—a gentleness in his intonation, a

* Brash, a local name for the tiny morsels of coal and drift-wood that fringe the waves along the beach near to the mouths of rivers or becks.

tremulousness in his voice not to be noted without alarm.

It was a May evening, somewhat chilly, as the evenings of that month are apt to be in the north of 'Merry England.' There was a cold, blue look upon sea and sky, almost a threatening look ; but since the fishing-fleet of the neighbourhood was in safe shelter there was no special need for anxiety on account of the men and boys of the place who were not at home. Perhaps even a deeper anxiety might be caused by the recollection of such as had been left behind to await the news of success from those who had gone out in search of it. Not even old Ephraim could remember any year when the strain of living had been so great at Ulvstan Bight as it was now.

The affectionate words that Barbara had just heard from the old man's lips awoke the cord that had been reverberating through the past days.

As gently and deftly as might be she gave the children their supper of bread and milk-and-water, gave each one a careful bath in the little back-kitchen, listened to each one's

evening prayer, and gave to each one a last loving kiss. Then she came outside again to the stone seat where old Ephraim was still smoking in the chill, dark-blue evening light.

‘You’ll not have your supper out of doors this chilly night, gran’father?’ she asked, sitting down beside him for a moment—not a usual thing for her to do. In those stern northern regions the deepest love seldom shows the slightest sign of love’s most natural-seeming familiarity.

‘Ah think Ah will, Barbarie—Ah think Ah will to-night.’

And again came that shiver of fear, of dread to the girl at his side.

‘Just as you like, gran’father, just as you fancy,’ she replied, with seeming light-heartedness; and in a few minutes the little table was in front of him, the steaming soup sending out a grateful odour.

For a time the old man enjoyed his meal in silence—no, not quite that; the art of silent feeding was one he had not heard of. Since Barbara had heard it alluded to once she had become sensitive; but her sensitiveness was not hurt this evening.

‘It’s good, Barbara ; it’s good broth, this is ! Won’t ya hev a drop on it ?’

‘No, gran’father, thank you.’

Old Ephraim paused awhile—then, with most unwonted effusion, he laid his hand upon the girl’s arm, and said brokenly :

‘Ah know why, honey—Ah know it all ! I hev’n’t watched thee all these years athoot seein’ ’at thee never thinks for thyself—no, not for a minnit—it’s allus me, or the bairns, or Nan’s little Ildy ; or if it isn’t none of us, it’s somebody outside—onyhoo, it’s never thyself, as a bairn might see, lookin’ at thy thin white feäce. . . . An’ Ah mun sääy it some time, an’ that soon ; so Ah’ll say it noo, Ah can’t beär to watch thee noä longer. Ah’ve kept it all back tell the varry last ; an’ Ah’ve done that for my oän säke. Ah couldn’t bard noä talkin’. . . . An’ Ah’s noän an oäd man yit—not me ; why, Ah’s nobbut i’ my seventies ! An’ there was oäd Jake Moss as went to the Greenlan’ Seas in his nineties ! An’ as for me, why Ah’s nobbut just going doon by t’ edge o’ t’ coäst an’ up again ! An’ that just i’ th’ spring o’ th’ year, when all’s as quiet as can be. . . . Te tell the

treuth, Barbie, Ah's despart set o' goin'—*despart* set on it! Ah never thowt 'at Ah sud be, but I is. . . . Naäy, Ah was kind o' feard on't, an' had a kind o' dread o' facin' the saut water again. 'Twas rether straänge! wasn't it noo? An' then all at once Ah turn'd back o' mysel', and seemed, so to saäy, craäzed o' goin'! . . . Why nowt would stop ma noo!—noä, nowt 'at Ah can think on! Ah's fair impatient for the morro' mornin'. . . . It is queer, noo, isn't it!

'The morrow morning!' Barbara repeated quietly.

The old man did not see how pale she grew, how her lips whitened suddenly, how full of deep pain was the look that she fixed upon the far sea-horizon.

'Ay, to-morro' mornin', honey; an' better so! Thee can't ha' no time to fret!'

Then the old man laughed a long, low laugh, meant to be easy and quite unaffected, but not altogether successful.

'Frettin'!' he exclaimed presently. 'Te talk o' frettin' aboot an aud salt like me goin' fra Hildshaven to the Thames an' back again

at midsummer! Goodness gracious me! what may one live to come to?’

There was another pause—a pause that meant for Barbara a strong and stern strife. She knew—recognised most certainly—that any effort to stay the old man must end in failure. As he said, there was no danger to be dreaded; that is, none save such as must attend every man who joins the brave army of those who go down to the sea in ships.

And all such dangers he had braved long ago—braving such extreme moments as few had passed through with sufficient energy to enable them to describe their experience in detail. As Damian Aldenmede had often said, Ephraim Burdas’s life, truly written, would have been a life to rank with the most thrilling biographies of the English language.

Unfortunately there was no one at hand to write it. Barbara Burdas, his granddaughter, the recipient of his every experience, might *see* the book—see it in her mind’s eye from the first page to the last—but, happily for her, the mysteries of pen and ink were yet most elaborately mysterious.

That one should simply sit down to a desk

and write some words which should afterwards be translated into print, the printed sheets be transformed into bound books, was enlightenment of the most startling kind. ‘Was *that* how books were made?’

But she was not thinking of these things on this blue, bleak May evening. Her thought was drawn to the idea of parting from her grandfather, the nominal head of the house, the nominal mainstay. After all, was it imperative that he should go?

So wondering, so hoping, so fearing, Barbara went to bed, leaving her grandfather to enjoy the rising moon, the silvery sea, the peace—the precious peace of that life in Ulvstan Bight.

By-and-by the old man went indoors; and by-and-by he too slept. The moon sailed above the Forecliff, above the sea, above a realm of quiet that seemed as if it might never be broken. And the gray dawn was quiet too—quiet and sombre and tristful. But presently there came the sound of human intrusion upon the peace of nature. Yet it was a thoroughly characteristic sound, and in keeping with the scene.

‘Ephraim Burdas, old man! where be ya? *The Land o’ the Leal* is off o’ Danesbro’ waitin’ for ya; so if ya mean to sail wiv her as ya said—if ya’ve noän chänged yare mind, come along sharp! . . .’

Barbara had heard, feeling afresh the chill shivering of the previous evening as she did so; and as she dressed in haste, her every thought was a prayer. In a few minutes she was outside the cottage making inquiries of Peter Grainger as to the details of the voyage, and the probable length of it. She had not asked any of these questions before.

As she had discovered only the previous evening, and to her great pain, her grandfather’s belongings were all ready. His hammock and blanket had been packed while she was out beyond the Bight at the limpet-beds—nay, she knew that for weeks past he must have been secretly and silently making his preparations. He had left no worrying or tiresome detail to irritate the last moment.

Her first instinct was to rush indoors again and dress the children; the two elder boys

could dress themselves, and Ailsie could assist the smallest of the brothers. The baby took all the time Bab had to give.

They were all outside the cottage at the last moment. Jack and Stevie were almost hilarious at the idea of their grandfather going to sea again; but little Ailsie would not respond, and hid her face in Barbara's gown and wept sorely.

'He'll noän come back, grandfather won't,' the child sobbed in whispers, not to be heard by any save Bab herself. 'He'll noän come back—no, never! I'll have to go to him! . . . He'll noän come back here again—no, never!'

CHAPTER LV.

A LETTER FROM THE LAKE OF THE FOUR CANTONS.

‘Take back the hope you gave—I claim
Only a memory of the same.’

ROBERT BROWNING.

‘How dreary life must be at the Rectory just now!’ a lady parishioner exclaimed one day to Gertrude Douglas.

Miss Douglas liked to have such remarks made to her; she was a little vain that it should be known how completely she was in the confidence of everyone in the house on the hill-top. And no one could say that she had ever betrayed the confidence reposed in her. If not altogether a wise woman, she was by no means to be classed with the foolish. And her saving grace was that she was free from all taint of malice, or evil will, or bitter recollection. She hardly knew what

it was to remember an unfortunate remark. Her temperament seemed always charged to overflowing with kindness and pleasantness ; and she had what certain people called a ‘gift for seeing everything *couleur de rose*.’ The gift is a valuable one, as well for the neighbour of the possessor as for the possessor himself.

‘Dreary!’ she replied to the inquiring lady in her most liquid and musical tone. ‘Well, no ; do you know, after all it is hardly that. They are not dreary people, either the Canon or Mrs. Godfrey.’

‘Oh, well,’ the lady replied, ‘a shade or two in the meaning of a word is not usually of much importance in conversation. You know what I meant. It must be a time of sadness compared with times past. Think of the life there a year ago—only last spring—the garden-parties, the tennis, the people gathered there always, some to meet the Merediths—popular people always—some to try to make out that perplexing artist—what was his name? I forget.’

‘Aldenmede — Damian Aldenmede. . . . There are people who set down the whole catastrophe to his account.’

‘So they do. . . . I never did.’

‘Didn’t you?’ Miss Douglas asked with a very clever note of indifference in her accent. ‘Yet there must have been a cause; don’t you think so?’

‘Undoubtedly,’ said the lady, hiding an inconvenient smile. ‘And that a cause not far to seek. The match between Mr. Meredith and Miss Theyn was never a likely one; the merest onlooker could see that!’

‘Do you think so? Well, you *do* surprise me!’ Gertrude exclaimed. And there is no doubt but that her surprise was genuine. ‘We—that is, all of us at the Rectory—all of us who really knew them both well, considered the engagement a most desirable one; desirable in every sense.’

‘Desirable, yes; but suitable, *no!*’ was the emphatic reply. ‘And the event was proof enough that Miss Theyn saw as I saw, as others saw! . . . I have only sorrow for her—and yet no, something more than sorrow—I have admiration, hope. *She will live to be glad!*’

With this half-dubious word, Miss Douglas’s interlocutor went her way, and Gertrude pro-

ceeded to the Rectory, where Mrs. Godfrey was only now engaged in the saddening task of returning one by one the whole of the numerous wedding presents sent to her niece.

When Gertrude entered the drawing-room, Mrs. Godfrey was already in tears; for the very weariness, the very deadness and flatness of the future, she could not help the tears.

‘I could forget the past,’ she said, the hot drops streaming through her beautiful white hands. ‘I could forget it all if I had hope for the future. But to think of her thus, my own child, most delicately cared for from her birth; “spoiled,” people said, who could not see that what they called spoiling was the very condition of her life. People talk, the newspapers write, the doctors lecture, on what is called “Infant Mortality,” on the frightful “waste of human life.” Does anyone who has ever brought up an infant from the birth ever cease to wonder that that “waste” is not tenfold greater than it is? It may be that it is better, in a certain sense, that it is so. If the little ones die, they cease to suffer. I have thought thus ever since I had the care of Thorda. She was so different

from other children, and as a girl she was unlike any girl I ever knew. You will understand me, Gertrude, where others would deride me, when I say she was so superior—that is not the word I want, but it will do. She was always so reserved, so dainty, had such a dread of things common, and rough, and coarse. . . . And to think of her now, a servant of servants, helping to dress the most loathsome wounds ; brought face to face with the most impossibly offensive sights and sounds—oh, I cannot bear to think of it ! Even her uncle, who takes what I may almost call the opposite view of the whole matter, even he has sorrow for her, though he will not admit it—not easily. Yet he cannot hide the fact that he is grieving—how should he ? Having no daughter of our own, Thorda was *more* than a daughter to us. She was a blessing sent to fill the place of a blessing denied, and therefore a double blessing. And until—until that unhappy hour, she never caused us one moment's heartache. While the hours of happiness she brought to us, who shall describe them ? . . . I cannot. I cannot believe that it is all over ; no, I cannot. Surely one mistake

cannot ruin a life—nay, more lives than one in this instance! Surely it cannot be!’

Miss Douglas was not wanting. Her ready flow of sympathetic words, the musical tone in which they were uttered, were all most helpful at the moment; and when by-and-by she offered her graceful, if not very helpful or adequate services, in aid of the work of the day, or rather of the week, her presence was certainly felt to be—as usual—altogether desirable. As package after package was wrapped up, sealed, addressed, each with its own painfully appropriate note, Mrs. Godfrey grew more and more grateful for the help afforded her.

‘It is so good of you, dear,’ she said, as another parcel—a fine gold bracelet set with diamonds—was being sealed by Gertrude. ‘It is so very good of you. I could not ask my maid to help me in a task like this: she is too callous; she would have driven me half wild. On the other hand, there was only my husband, who could not have helped me for the life of him. He would have broken down while sealing the first package.’

‘Do you think so? Do you really think

that he would ?' Miss Douglas asked, not wishing to show superior discernment, but more clearly alive to the Canon's strength of will than might have been supposed.

Perhaps it was fortunate that at that point an interruption should occur. Ellerton entered the room with a letter on a tray—a foreign letter, as Mrs. Godfrey saw at a glance. She broke the seal with some trepidation.

'How strange!' she exclaimed, unfolding the thin paper. 'How very strange that this should come now! It is from Mr. Aldenmede.'

'From Mr. Aldenmede!' Gertrude exclaimed. 'Oh, *do* tell me about him! Where is he? The Pyramids? The Rocky Mountains?'

'You shall know all presently, dear. The letter is dated from the Hôtel Unterwalden, Lucerne. . . . Ah, how well I know it! how well I can see it all! The blue bright lake, the blue sky, the green trees, the hotel itself glowing from top to bottom with its dazzling crimson-and-white *persiennes*. . . . And then the scenery beyond, and all around, everywhere! . . . But we shall see what Mr.

Aldenmede says of it. He must be happy there!’

And truth to say the letter had touches of healing in it : the healing that comes of intercourse with Nature—Nature at her greatest and grandest.

‘I have been to the Riviera,’ Mr. Aldenmede wrote, ‘and intend going to the North Italian lakes in a few days. I am hoping to be able to paint a picture—a lovely piece of scenery at the lower end of the Lago di Garda. My hotel will be the Cavazzola, Desenzano. If you should be moved to write, be assured that I should be most grateful to receive a letter. These May evenings are long, and lovely, and lonely. The mornings are beautiful beyond all description. Those who have only seen Mont Pilatus in “the season,” when the snow has gone, and the purple shadows lie deep upon the mountains all day, can easily understand why it should usually be spoken of as “Gloomy Pilatus.” But oh, that the world could see it as I see it now! Better still as I saw it this morning at four o’clock! It would need the pen of a Ruskin to do any sort of justice to it! There had been rain at Lucerne

and in the neighbourhood for an entire week—the cold rain that means snow even on the lowest mountain heights. Even last night all was gray, and dead, and lowering. Judge, then, what I felt this morning when, on awakening at four, I saw instantly that the world about me was flooded with sunshine. And *such* sunshine! Before your head leaves the pillow you are dazzled, exhilarated.

‘I feel paralysed when I think of trying, by means of mere pen and paper, to give you any idea of the glorious scene that burst upon me when I stood by my window side. . . . I am not ashamed to say that I saw it first through tears.

‘One hardly knew which way to look first, whether down the Lake of Lucerne, with mountains on every side, blue, snow-white, or rose-red, according to whether you happened to look left or right, to sunlight or to shade. And as for the lake itself—its intense glowing blue in the fore-front of the scene, the sparkle as of diamonds in every tiny ripple; the shore scenery, picturesque and interesting where it was near, picturesque and mystic where it was far off—how shall anyone give any idea

of it in a letter ! And even as I looked there began to rise from the lower end of the lake such strange, white, snowy, mysterious clouds, spreading in long lance-like lines from bay to bay, rising from peak to peak, that though I was aware of some strong attraction drawing me away to some other scene, I yet could not turn.

‘ To watch those long, white clouds, glistening and shining above, under-shot with the pearliest of blue-gray tints below—to see these mists embodied, so to speak, to watch them rising against the grand peaks of the Alpine range, dissolving as they rose, turning now to pink, now to white, and then the next moment not visible at all, certainly this was a lesson in the formation of clouds. I cannot ever again look upon the sky with such ignorance as I have suffered from hitherto. This morning on Lake Lucerne was a dividing line in my life. A wall fell, and I saw beyond.

‘ But not even yet have I tried to describe the one surpassing moment. Of set purpose I have refrained.

‘ And yet I knew it was there, Mont Pilatus in all its glory, such glory as I am told it does

not display three times in three years. So you see, I am *sometimes* fortunate.

‘ Perhaps you will even discern that I am writing this letter before breakfast, under the strong impulse of the exhilaration of this glorious mountain air and scenery. Though I am by no means new to foreign travel, this moment has hitherto been unsurpassed.

‘ How shall I tell you of the sight that burst upon me as I turned to the mountain on my right ? “ Gloomy Pilatus ! ”

‘ From the lowest plateau, the lowest gorge on its magnificent side to the pointed rose-red, shining crown, shining far up in the white, glowing sky, Pilatus was there, every outline defined ; in the highest parts defined in the softest, most ethereal, shining rose-pink, against the shining white of the sunlit clouds beyond ; lower down the pine-trees, covered with snow, were outlined in pearly-gray tints upon the depth of snow behind.

‘ There was snow everywhere, colour everywhere, shining, rising mist, almost everywhere. . . . But what amazed me was the fact that nowhere did there seem to be any cold.

‘ Early though it was, between four and five in the morning, the people were thronging to church. The bells were ringing softly, the softer for the nearness of the water, which seems always to “liquidise” the sound; the fishing boats were gliding across the lake; people were sauntering under the chestnuts of the Schweizerhof Quai. Ah, how calm it all was, how full of peace !

‘ And even yet it is peaceful. Fancy having merely to turn one’s head to see Pilatus on one side, and the Rigi Kulm on the other ! And then all the snowy Alpine range between, point behind point, rising to the clouds, nay, piercing beyond them ! Below the snow the dark firs come; they are everywhere, lending such a depth of purple to the distance, such soft, deep, changeful mystic purple, as no palette could give you; and below the firs the calm, still sapphire lake reflecting all. I cannot help writing it once more ; everywhere there is calm, and to a soul needing this healing as mine does, the sensation fills one with gratitude, the holiest gratitude. I do not know that ever in my life before I felt so perfectly all that might be included in

the words, "Peace on earth, good will to men."

'And now that I have said all this about myself, do you not feel moved to be generous, to tell me all about yourself, and how the world seems to you, now that the world's happiest spot, your home fireside, is no longer brightened by the presence of your niece. You must congratulate yourself very sincerely on the fact that her home and yours are so near together. Will you give my kind remembrance to Mr. and Mrs. Meredith, and also to Mrs. Meredith senior.'

This latter part of the letter Mrs. Godfrey had not read aloud; and now she was glad that she had not.

For a few moments she tried to shade her tearful eyes with her hand; but Miss Douglas saw by the quivering lips, heard by the half-suppressed sigh, that pain was being endured; and well she knew the kind of pain. Fortunately she had no impulse toward attempting to relieve it.

A little later Mrs. Godfrey read aloud to her husband and to Miss Douglas some parts of the conclusion of the letter.

‘If you should at any time be moved to write to me, please tell me all that you know of Barbara Burdas and her household. I have written to her, more than once, and have received one very welcome letter in reply. What a noble girl she is ! Her natural instincts are so great, so unselfish ; and every now and then she finds how they have been crossed by hereditary strain, how they had been injured on this hand by training, or the influence that goes for training, on the other by neglect ; and all this she takes to herself for her own failing ! Yet that at her age and in her position she should be alive to it all, is a most astonishing thing to me ! And it is even more astonishing that she should go on gathering bait, mending nets, washing, cooking, serving by day, and yet should have the intellectual appetite to sit down and read Ruskin or Carlyle, Shakespeare or Tennyson, by night. And then her love for the children, her especial love for her little sister Ailsie, and for her friend’s motherless baby : does it not show how completely her character is womanly all round ?

‘Yet I am not quite happy about her. How should I be? All the while, from the first day of my seeing her, I had wished to do something to alleviate her position a little; yet I dreaded with a very natural dread to interfere with what seemed to me the arrangement of a higher Power. Now, however, I have fears, and it may be time that I should step in and do what I can. Will you help me? Will you bring your finer feminine tact to bear upon a most difficult feminine problem? As to the pecuniary part, without being needlessly explicit, I may say that I can, that I shall be happy to, do whatever you may think wise.

‘I need hardly say that we must work together with discretion, seeming to bestow our attention upon the children, or the grandfather. Barbara’s pride is seldom in a very quiescent state. That is one of her shortcomings. She has hardly arrived at the perception of the fact that to receive a benefit from a friend gracefully is to have reached a high point of human training. . . . We must help her training on this head, you and I, that is if you will kindly co-operate with me.

And I feel sure you will. I have written all this without once questioning your kindness.'

That was nearly the end of the letter. The Canon asked to see it after dinner, and read it through again from beginning to end, but he read it in silence. Miss Douglas was at the piano, playing some of Thorda's music, now and then singing one of her songs. . . . Perhaps it might only be in these minor matters that her intuition failed.

'This is pleasant, Milicent dear,' Hugh Godfrey said, leaning over the sofa on which his wife was resting in the dim lamp-light. 'This letter is very pleasant—for the most part—and opens up some charming ideas of life—ideas we had half forgotten. It is so long since we were abroad—so long since we saw a snow-crowned Alp! Can't we manage it—you and I?'

'And take Thorda with us? We must do that; *that* we must do.'

'And have it said that you had taken her abroad to meet Damian Aldenmede!' Miss Douglas interposed, leaving the music-stool. She had lost no word of all that had been said.

Well accustomed as Mr. and Mrs. Godfrey were to Miss Douglas and her peculiarities, much as they appreciated her manifold good qualities, there were yet moments when she occasioned them at least surprise.

Her suggestion was met with silence—a perfect but not painless silence.

With true large-heartedness the Canon turned from a difficult topic to one that at least promised easier continuance.

‘We must think over what Mr. Aldenmede says of Barbara Burdas,’ the Canon remarked. ‘How good he is! How few men would have remembered an Ulvstan fisher-girl, and have written of her thus, while among the most perfect scenery of the Swiss Alps!’

‘But how few fisher-girls would strike the chords of remembrance as Barbara does! You wouldn’t speak of her in the same breath as Kirsty Verrill, or Martha Thixen?’

The Canon only smiled his reply.

‘You will go down to the Bight soon, dear?’ he asked. ‘It will be an additional grace in Aldenmede’s eyes if you send him a few words at once.’

‘We will go to-morrow, in the forenoon if you can, Hugh, dear. You must come with me.’

‘Gladly, if it be fine. But I am doubtful about the weather.’

‘The glass has been going down all day, so my father said,’ Miss Douglas remarked. ‘And even now it looks threatening,’ she added. ‘Perhaps I had better go at once.’

‘No, Gertrude, dear. If it looks threatening—and I think it does—that is sufficient reason for your staying. There is your old room. And they will not expect you at home when they see these clouds!’

Gertrude laughed.

‘They never do *expect* me,’ she said carelessly. ‘If I am at home by ten, well and good; if not, the doors are locked. My father is very rigid.’

CHAPTER LVI.

AT THE OLD HOUSE ON THE FORECLIFF.

‘Break, break, break,
On thy cold, gray stones, O sea !
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.’

TENNYSON.

As the party at the Rectory had anticipated, there was a change of weather during the night, but it was, on the whole, a less severe change than the signs had seemed to predict.

At dawn the boisterous wind went down, and with its fall the sea fell from its midnight wildness. By noonday there was nothing to prevent the most ‘weather-fended’ person from going out of doors, and consequently, at luncheon, Mrs. Godfrey announced her intention of going down to the Forecliff.

‘I am going in obedience to the request of Mr. Aldenmede,’ she said with her usual light

pleasantness of manner. ‘Gertrude, you will come with me?’

‘I! oh *no!*’ Miss Douglas exclaimed, uttering the words with such musical vehemence, with such pretty gestures of surprise, that neither of the two who watched her were moved to trace her objection to its source. However, there was no underthought in her own mind to prevent her from disclosing the thought that was uppermost.

‘How you do such things, dear Mrs. Godfrey, I don’t know!’ she exclaimed, with that brightness of emphasis which was one of her most prominent social attractions. ‘It is all very well to care for the poor,’ she went on, quite seriously now. Miss Douglas was an artist in the lights and shades of vocal expression; and many a struggling histrionic aspirant, struggling with a strongly-artistic inward impetus overbalanced by ignorance of all the requisite outward culture—many such might have envied Gertrude Douglas her instinct of intonation. It was strange that all inward illumination should be wanting, all spiritual inspiration denied.

‘It is all very well for one to care for the

poor,' she said quite gravely, 'but to care for them is one thing, to endure . . . the—shall I say, for politeness' sake, the *odour* of their dwellings, is another. We are all bound to care for the common people; whether we are bound to endure the . . .'

Miss Douglas did not finish her remarks. Her phrase, 'the common people,' had so roused one of her interlocutors that he did not permit her to finish.

He repeated the phrase, in tones of indignation he was sorry afterward to have used to a guest.

'Common people! Why do we use that phrase?' he asked, 'or rather, why do we use it speaking only of the poor? It is so senseless! If we mean "vulgar," either in the old sense or the new, let us say so. . . . Common! I fancy we might find two uncommon characters among the very poor for one among the classes above them in possessions, in culture. Besides, there is such a terrible ring of would-be superiority in the way we use the words nowadays.'

It was characteristic that Miss Douglas only laughed pleasantly as the Canon concluded,

and even while she laughed she darted most charming glances of understanding, first to Mrs. Godfrey, then toward the head of the table where the Canon sat, already half-ashamed of his vehemence.

‘Gertrude, you are the best-tempered girl in the world,’ he said, in his own generous straightforward way. ‘You never take offence!’

‘Take offence at you!’ she replied, her bright eyes just a little moistened with a tear not meant to fall. The little episode was all forgotten long before Mrs. Godfrey left her at her father’s door.

‘Come again soon, dear; to-morrow, if you can,’ Mrs. Godfrey exclaimed, kissing her hand to the doctor’s daughter as the carriage drove away. Then she sank back among her cushions, silent and lonely. She was apt to admit that her own thoughts were never very good company.

The Rectory carriage had ceased to make much sensation on the Forecliff. A neighbour or two ran out to watch the progress of the vehicle up the narrow street, the rough little lane bordered with dusty coltsfoot. Two

little lads—they were Jack and Zebulon—stood at the top of the lane, and went running into the Sagged House as the carriage came ; but alas for all Mrs. Godfrey's amiable intention, it was only old Hagar who came out.

‘ Eh, my laädy,’ she exclaimed, dropping an unwonted curtsey, a rare thing on the Fore-cliff. ‘ Eh, madam, but Bab's not here. It'll be her yer wantin' for sure ?’

‘ Yes, I was wishing to see Barbara,’ Mrs. Godfrey exclaimed, leaving the carriage and going toward the door of the house. ‘ May I come in ?’ she asked with an amiable smile, and passing on in her grand, stately way. No wonder poor old Hagar was overpowered, and hardly knew what she said or did.

The cottage fire was low and gray ; the fireside, which had always been so bright and clean, was heaped with dust and ashes. Wooden washing-tubs filled with dirty clothing and dirty water stood in muddy pools upon the brick floor, upon chairs, upon stools ; the remains of the dinner stood in unsavoury untidiness upon the table by the window. The two boys, unkempt, uncared-for in every way, stood by

the old oak bureau, looking as if they did not understand this new order of things. Hagar was drying a sloppy chair with her apron for Mrs. Godfrey to sit upon, talking volubly all the while ; and in such evidently heartfelt accents of regret that she was already forgiven. In her own heart Mrs. Godfrey was less hard upon dirt and disorder than some who are fain to profess a greater tolerance.

‘ Eh, but I is sorry, I is desptert sorry,’ the old woman was saying. ‘ Bab’ll never forgie ma, no niver. She tell’d me so surely ’at Ah wasn’t to meddle wi’ no washin’ ; there was clean things anuff an’ te spare tell she came back. So there would ha’ been, but when Suze Andoe came in yesterday, an’ saw as A’d nowt to do, she offered ma ninepence ef Ah’d wesh a few things oot for her ; an’ so Ah started this mornin’ ; an’ then Suzy came in wiv her pipe an’ sat an’ talked, an’ smooked, so as Ah couldn’t get on a bit. An’ here I is ! Eh, what would Barbarie saäy if she could see you i’ sike a muddle as this !’

It was some time before Mrs. Godfrey could make herself heard. Old Hagar’s hearing was

less quick than her tongue. In answer to the inquiry of the Rector's wife as to where Barbara Burdas might have gone, a very flood of words was poured out, explaining things past, present, and to come.

First came a history of the poverty that was universal on the coast about Ulvstan, its cause, its duration, with many details quite irrelevant. Next, evidently coming somewhat nearer to the point, old Ephraim Burdas's biography was given from Hagar's first recollection to the last.

‘An’ when I heerd tell o’ the old man’s wantin’ te goä to sea again, wantin’ so terribly as they saäy he did, why Ah’d nobbut one thowt. Ah’ve heered tell on it afore, my laädy, that despert longin’ ’at comes upon a seafarin’ man — a longin’ just *te goä one more voyage*—that’s hoo they put it, or rayther hoo it’s put te them. An’ when they can’t but goä, when noä reason ’ll touch ’em, noä beggin’ nor prayin’ move ’em, why then folks begin to see; an’ they saäy “good-bye,” knowin’ ’at all’s overed. . . . It was so i’ this case, my laädy, it was indeed; an’ Bab knowed it. An’ when the old man had fairly gone, she broke

doon, an' cried as Ah'd niver seen her cry afore—noä, nut even when both father an' mother were drooned afore her eyes. She were that sure 'at she'd never set her eyes on the old man again.'

'But you say that she has gone to him, to Hild's Haven?' Mrs. Godfrey inquired, recalling to the old woman's mind an admission she had made at first.

'Ay, so she hes; an' glad anuff she were to goä.'

'How long is it now since she went?'

'How long? Weel, let ma see! It's a week noo, more or less, sen' the letter com'—a letter fra the master, Christifer Baildon. He's part owner o' the schooner, a trader she is, tradin' atween Hild's Haven an' London. He was wantin' a extry hand this summer, as Ephraim had heerd tell, an' so they agreed; an' Ephraim sailed, an' had a prosperous voyage anuff tell they got back te Hild's Haven. An' just afore they landed the old man sickened all at once, an' he was that bad 'at the master wrote for Bab te goä at once if so 'twere 'at she cared te see him alive. So it were 'at she went, at a minnit's notice; an'

she'd no thought o' takin' noän o' the bairns save Nan's Ildy ; but at the last minit little Ailsie began te cry i' that brokken-hearted way 'at Bab could niver stand. An' hearin' Ailsie, little Steve began te cry just i' the saäme fashion. Bab turned as white as a sheet. "Put 'em up a night-goon apiece, Hagar," she said ; for she was washin' an' dressin' t' infant just then. "Ah'll take 'em wi' me, them two," she went on. An' Ah daured not gainsay her. So it was she went ; an' so it is 'at Ah'me here wi' Jack and Zeb ; but Ah's despert sorry about the weshin'.'

Mrs. Godfrey had listened with an interest only equalled by her patience. Till the tale was done she hardly knew how some touch of weirdness in the old woman's language and manner had affected her.

It is hardly too much to say that the Rector's wife felt as if she had been listening to the story of the going forth of some sentence of doom, a very indefinite sentence, but involving disaster.

Mrs. Godfrey was so far from being a superstitious woman that those who knew

her best considered her most incredulous on any matter touching upon things unseen.

And it was no mere profession, no mere light, clever, sarcastic way of making a drawing-room full of people wonder at her ready word, or envy her strong clearheadedness. She was undoubtedly free from the awe and dread of things not comprehended that accompany some people from the cradle to the grave.

Yet at this moment, in the fisherman's cottage, she sat silent and chill, wrought upon by what might certainly have been termed 'an old wife's' tale. When it was so termed later, Mrs. Godfrey heard the accusation, and did not reply. At this moment her words were not ready; she was silent awhile. Then she asked of Hagar, speaking in an aimless way :

'Was it wise of Barbara to take the little ones, three of them, and one an infant but a few months old?'

'*Wise*, my laädy! It were madness, just that! An' for Bab te do such a thing—her of all others! . . . Eh, well, there's more i' the world, *or but just outside the world*, nor we

know on. An' folks can't do as they will. We noän on us can. An' Ah'm noän goin' te blame Barbarie, let what ceme on it will, Ah'll noän saäy one word o' blaäme mysel'. . . . Ah'd be an ungraäteful wretch if Ah did, seein' all she's done for me!

' Blame her, poor child! Who will do that, I wonder?' Mrs. Godfrey said, rising to go.

She had a basket in her hand with some strawberry jam for the children, and a packet or two of expensive farinaceous food for Barbara's baby, and the basket was left behind a little sadly.

Mrs. Godfrey had taken her seat in the carriage, the coachman was prepared to start, when all at once the postman came up, handed a letter to old Hagar, which the old woman took with a dropping at the corners of her mouth that touched the Rector's wife piteously.

' Stay a moment, Woodward!' she exclaimed; then, turning to Hagar, she said gently, ' Can you read the letter? Is it from Barbara? If it is, I should so much like to know what she says.'

It *was* from Barbara, as the old woman

knew it must be. And it was so long since she had received any letter that she shook with dread, as she took it in her brown withered hands.

There was nothing dreadful about this epistle. It was clearly and carefully written. In writing it, Bab had wondered much into whose hands it must fall before Hagar could be made to understand its purport.

It was dated from Hild's Haven, from a small house near the quay, where old Ephraim had been received on his landing.

‘He had been very ill,’ Barbara wrote, ‘and when I came he was not much better. Now he is quite well in health, yet not like himself, not at all. Though he is not unhappy, he has not the spirit he used to have. Often, in days gone by, I have wished he was a little bit more quiet and gentle; now I would give anything to hear him fly and snap at one in the old way. But he does not; and I think he never will again. I am so glad I brought the little ones, because he seems never tired of seeing them; and with trying to amuse them he amuses himself.

‘ The people here are very good. Still it is expensive, and costs more than I have to pay with, as the Captain knows. He is very kind, and to save railway fare he is going to let me and the children come back in the schooner all the way to the Balderstone. He could have put us ashore a lot easier at Danesborough, as I pointed out to him, but being so kind, he said it wouldn’t make much difference to him if he left us, so to speak, on our own doorstep. I shall never forget him for being so good to Ildy and Ailsie ; and I do believe he’ll be even kinder to grandfather than he was before.

‘ I expect we’ll be at home two days from this. That will be Friday; but whether it will be the fore part of the day or the latter part, I can’t tell. We shouldn’t have had this chance, but just now the *Land o’ the Leal* wanted some slight repairs, which is being done here.

‘ Give the little lads a kiss apiece, and tell them how it comforts me to feel so sure that they are behaving well, and especially being good to you.

‘ May God bless all of you—that is the

prayer made many times both by night and by day by

‘Your friend,

‘BARBARA BURDAS.’

Mrs. Godfrey read the letter aloud to old Hagar, who listened, still tremulous, but inclined to be tearful.

‘O’ Fridaäy, laädy—you säiy she’s comin’ o’ Friday! Well, may the Lord be thanked, for I’ve had such dread o’ my mind—such straänge dread! . . . An’ you säiy old Ephraim’s better, an’ they’re comin’ back! They’re all comin’ o’ Fridaäy! Well, well! But it is straänge!’

CHAPTER LVII.

‘GO AND PRAY—THE NIGHT DRAWS NEAR.’

‘A shadow on the moonlight fell,
And murmuring wind and wave became
A voice whose burden was her name.’

J. G. WHITTIER.

THAT so much of all that is hidden from the wise and prudent should be revealed unto those who are verily babes in this world’s wisdom is undoubtedly a striking thing, and not easily intelligible.

To become intimately acquainted with a poor and uneducated man or woman who has passed, or, better still, is at present passing, through the deeper seas of spiritual experience, is to feel the scales falling from one’s eyes—the scales of ignorance, of misconception.

If one can pass, as it were, behind the

phraseology, which to some people may be so banal, so commonplace, as to be utterly unmeaning—nay, almost revolting—if one can do this—and it is not always difficult—then it is that one finds one's self face to face with that wonder, that mercy for which our Master uttered the words, 'I thank Thee, O Father!'

The inner life of David Andoe had for a long period of time been a life of struggle, of hours, nay, days of darkness, of heaviness, of almost despair.

Is it not of itself a strange thing that a man so ignorant, so utterly uncultured, unintellectual in almost every sense of the word—is it not matter for wonder that such a one should still be convinced in his own mind that somewhere, somehow to be obtained even by him, there is a state of peace, of mental and spiritual quiet; a state into which no dread of the vast unknown future can enter—the future that lies beyond the day of death—a state over which but little disquiet as to the present—this sad, troubled, wearying, worrying present—can ever prevail? Is not this assurance a strange thing, we repeat?

All the while David Andoe had had this conviction. He had even held it through one of the two most terrible tests that can come to any human being—the test of a strong, overpowering affection, broken or bereaved.

He had had but little help from without. The Zion Chapel people had not understood him altogether; and of late they had not even made pretence of greatly sympathising with him. That a man who had been prayed with and for during a space of over two years should not yet have ‘found salvation’ was an almost unheard-of thing, and the cause of much doubtful speculation.

The result of all this was to throw the man more and more upon himself; and his very lonesomeness grew more and more a terrible thing.

One thing he had for which he could be greatly thankful—he could pray. And now so long he had prayed amongst the rocks and weed-grown boulders of Ulvstan Bight that it seemed as if the place must for ever be a holy place to him. Though he did not

actually put off his shoes as he approached, he yet drew near the spot in that attitude of mind symbolized by the act of uncovering the feet or head. It is for ever true that for each one of us our holy ground must be the place we have made holy by our own prayer—our own prayerful suffering.

There are other grounds holy to us, consecrated to us by the holiness, the suffering of other lives. So it is that

‘The whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the Feet of God.’

That night was a memorable night in the history of David Andoe.

Already he had passed through an hour that he knew to be a crisis in his life—one of those hours that lie enshrined in the memory of most people who have any inner life at all. He had begun by feeling an unusual sense of darkness, of depression. His life was a failure; his sins were deep and dark beyond the possibility of forgiveness. His very prayers were unanswered; and so, doubtless, unheard. For years he had waited for a sign; and yet no shadow of a sign had been given.

But to-night, less than an hour ago, a great change had passed upon the man.

While he prayed the cloud was lifted, the cloud that had rested upon all his later life.

He could not have described the hour, or his experience of it, with any definiteness. He only knew that where all had been misery and heaviness, now there was a sense of happiness. Where darkness had been, now light reigned. The hopelessness that had crushed him to the earth was turned to a sudden lightness and buoyancy, to the feeling that enables a human being to meet on equal terms any other arbiter of the changes and chances of human life.

In one way or another, are we not each of us the determining quality of the truth or untruth of the life of some other one?

The Divine Love, moving within us like all other love that is pure and true, is for ever unselfish.

Its first thought is not 'Am I my brother's keeper?' but rather this, 'Where is my brother? Let me find him, that this my happiness may overflow upon him; that I

may have the increased happiness of feeling that his sympathy is deepening the channels of my own.'

Not consciously, not articulately do these thoughts come; nor do they bring surprise. They are part of the natural sequence of the supernatural life.

It was growing late now; and David was turning to go home when he discerned among the rocks and stones of the beach another figure, the figure of a wanderer lonely as himself. Some time passed before he knew that the wanderer was no other than Hartas Theyn.

It is quite probable that neither of these men recognised each other with perfect calmness. David was the first to speak.

'Ah'd no thought to meet you here to-night, sir!' he said with unembarrassed simplicity. But even as he spoke it struck him why it was that he had this unusual opportunity. He had not been without a touch of fear himself.

The past week had been a week of most variable weather. The wind had repeatedly risen to a gale with appalling suddenness, and

then as suddenly sunk to a dead calm. This is the weather the fisherman dreads most of all, and with good reason.

More than once during the past five days the fishing-boats had had to fly with all the speed they were capable of to the nearest safe shelter.

It was thus that it happened that David Andoe was at home on a comparatively favourable night. Neither he nor his mates had trusted to the promise of the earlier evening.

‘Ah’d no thought to meet you here, sir!’ David began. Then presently he added, ‘Yet Ah may almost say as how Ah feared it was you.’

‘Feared!’ Hartas Theyn exclaimed wonderingly.

‘Ay, that was how Ah put it, sir!’ was the reply. ‘An’ Ah think as mebbe ya know hoo Ah meant it—not i’ noä awk’ard waäy—far fra that! . . . Naäy, to tell the trewth, it was the fear i’ mysel’ as was the ground o’ my fearin’ it was you. If one hes a bit o’ oneasiness that oneasiness grows when ya know other folks is feelin’ the same.’

‘Then you know nothing?’ Hartas asked, with deadly sinking about his heart.

‘Nothin’, sir. We looked for the passin’ o’ the *Land o’ the Leal* last night. . . . An’ she’s never passed.’

‘And you have no news?’

David hesitated a moment before replying.

‘Noän to speak on, sir,’ he said at last. ‘The schooner left Hild’s Haven.’

‘You know that?’

‘Yes: we know that.’

‘And—and old Ephraim Burdas was on board.’

‘Old Ephraim, an’ Barbarie, an’ the three little childer.’

Again there was silence, prolonged, painful, pregnant.

‘And you say there has been no tidings at all?’ Hartas inquired again, as if incredulous.

‘Noän, sir—noä tidin’s.’

Something in the fisherman’s reply, some touch of *insouciance* mingled with the sadness, awoke a feeling that was as a momentary ray of hope.

‘Then what are people thinking—what are

they hoping?' Hartas asked with just a slight infusion of impatience. It was well subdued; and the quiet moonlight resting upon the wan worn features of a man yet so young betrayed how deep was the emotion at the root of the momentary absence of control.

David quite understood; and since to understand is usually to sympathise, he hastened to disclose his own view to its last outline.

'It's so, sir. They'd leave Hild's Haven last night—there's noä doobt o' that! An' then, as it's reckoned, about three hours or so efter they left the harbour mouth a squall swept up, an' two fishin' boats as was enterin' Hild's Haven was both upset on the bar, an' one man was droonded—only one oot o' seven, but he'd a wife an' five little childer at home, an' another expected. That other was born ta mid-night, so I've just been told, an' half an hour later the dead body o' the father was carried into the same room; they'd nobbut one, so they could do no other. . . . Ah'd just been thinkin' o' that woman, sir, she's under thirty yet—a young woman—so te saäy; and five bairns aboot her bed, a new-

born bairn in her arms, an’ the dead body of as fine a fellow—as fine, an’ tall, an’ stoot a fellow as ya ever saw—he mun be lyin’ close by the bed somewhere. Yes, I was thinkin’ on it all, sir, an’ hoor ago, an’—I’ve no shame i’ confessin’ it—I was prayin’ as God would help *her*—help her specially, so to speak, durin’ the two or three daäys to come. . . . I was strangely drawn to dwell upon the moment when they’ll bear that man’s body away fra the woman’s sight an’ side. . . Good Heaven ! Hoo *will* she bear it ?’

All the while Hartas Theyn stood, his pale face uplifted in the moonlight, and silence, a desire for silence, written on his every feature. . . . He spoke at last.

‘And you say that squall came on after the *Land o’ the Leal* had left Hild’s Haven ?’

‘Yes, a good bit efter, maybe a couple o’ hours. . . . But Ah’d not argue the worst fra that ; noä, nor a good bit off the worst. The schooner was—she is a tidy little thing, a real Hild’s Haven bottom, an’ well set up wi’ gear. . . . She’d meet the squall ; I’m feared there’s noäin much room for doubt ’at she would meet it, but it ’ud be as nowt, bless ya,

as nowt at all to a trim little craft like that wi' two such men on board as Christifer Baildon an' Peter Grainger. An' they've been blown oot o' their waäy, there's little doubt o' that. *My* idee is this, they've gone further oot to sea than they reckoned o' goin', that is just when the squall was on, an' soäi they've been blown past—I mean to säy past the Bight o' Ulvstan, where they meant to stop for a few minutes so as to land Barbarie an' the little uns. . . . So as you see, sir, there's no need to fear 'at any ill has befallen 'em. Noän at all! Why Ah doän't feel a bit down'd mysel', an' they say i' the Bight that Ah's one o' that sort 'at's quicker to see trouble nor happiness. . . . Well, mebbe it is soäi, happiness being so scarce in a man's life!

Hartas Theyn had never been without human understanding of a certain kind of human grief. Now his one fierce anticipation of trouble apart, he was yet concerned for the trouble, past and present, of this soul so near his own, yet so far away.

If one had time and space to put the matter clearly it would be easy to show how the change, the crisis, in David Andoe's soul

wrought a way into the soul of the man who had been what the world about them counted 'a rival.'

In this hour they were as brothers—brothers newly acquainted, seeing and glad to see the touches of relationship on either hand.

There was no gushing; few words of any kind attested the emotion that was swaying the heart of each.

David Andoe's last word touched Hartas to the core of his soul. It was not a word of complaint, still less of reproach, but it betrayed the man's life-long struggle with loneliness, with misery, with hopelessness. Rebuke was not present, either in word or tone, and it may be that for this very reason self-reproach struck more keenly to the heart of the Squire's son. A word, a mere word, would at one time have aroused to the uttermost the antagonistic spirit so strong within him; but though even that word was now unuttered his conscience was not quiet.

'It is difficult to speak of these things,' he said, resting his hand upon a big boulder overgrown with the dark brown wrack, and still wet with the receding tide. The smell of

the salt weed was about them everywhere ; the moonlight poured its silvery tide over the top of the black headland that was the northern bound of Ulvstan Bight ; there was a rippling, quivering stream of light stretching out across the waters of the German Ocean, and here and there the same light was dropping deep reflections into the pools that were between the tall dark masses of fallen rock. Here, if anywhere, might a man be moved to deliver himself of any painful or perilous aggregation lying deep under the surface of his soul.

‘It is difficult, it would be as painful to you as to me, if I were to say all I would wish to say,’ Hartas Theyn had begun. And David Andoe discerned the signs of effort, the pallid face, the quivering lip, the quick, short-coming breath.

‘It isn’t easy to say all one would like to say,’ the Squire’s son began in reply to David Andoe’s last remark. ‘I’ve thought of you often of late, and specially when I’ve had trouble of my own. . . . It’s then one begins to think of other folks, to wonder if one’s injured them in any way. An’ I’ve not been without fear, not by no means. . . . Still, let

me say this for myself, I never meant to injure no man. When I first knew I cared for her—for Barbara Burdas—she was a little child, a hardworking, thoughtful, winning child—you couldn’t look at her as she lifted her basket of bait up the rough steps of the rocks, but you were drawn to look at her again; maybe to smile because she was such a little thing, so small, so gentle, and had set herself to such big efforts. But she usually did all she had marked out for herself to do; and any chance assistance was not acknowledged too graciously. The very root of her nature is independence. . . . But I am wandering away from what I meant to be the point—my one fear lest you should think I had done something to turn *her* affection away from you. . . . Will you believe. . . .’

‘Stop, sir!’ David Andoe interposed solemnly, and as he spoke a great gray cloud swept up over the moon; the waters seemed to quiver more coldly under the shadow. The moment was dark, and chill, and heavy with unaccustomed heaviness.

‘Will you stop, sir?’ David begged. ‘An’ let *me* say a word, first of all a word o’ confession. Ah’ve not been without feelings o’

bitterness toward you, naäy, mebbe o' worse nor that ; but Ah've generally prayed again' all such till they've been a bit softened. . . . An' now all such is done awaäy—ay, done awaäy for iver ! . . . Ah can see it all so plain. Bab's never cared for me, not i' that wäy ; an' *Ah do firmly believe, sir, as she never would.* So you see, accordin' to my oän showin' Ah've no cause o' bitterness toward you. An' Ah'm glad, right down glad to hev a chance o' sayin' so ; an' somehow, Ah can hardly tell why, Ah'm glad at that chance has come to-night.'

Hartas held out his hand ; the fisherman grasped it warmly, silently. There was no need of words of assurance.

So they parted that night, not knowing how they were to meet again.

CHAPTER LVIII.

‘UPON THE WAVE-EDGED SAND.’

‘What is to-day that we should fear to-day ?
A morrow cometh which shall sweep away
Thee and thy realm of change and death and pain.’

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

It is strange to note how sometimes a rumour will creep, and grow, and spread, passing so slowly as to lose all zest in the passing. While another rumour, perhaps not more startling and important, will all at once spring to its position as an absorbing and overwhelming topic. The latter was the way in which fear as to safety of the *Land o' the Leal* spread through Ulvstan Bight and the neighbourhood. All at once, so it seemed, the very darkest views were taken. And nothing came to relieve the darkness.

David Andoe had firmly and fully believed

in the theory he had put before Hartas Theyn as to the schooner's possible chance of safety. No one else believed in it much.

The general impression, the one that had started into life so suddenly on the morning following the meeting of the two men on the scaur, was one of fear so strong and overpowering that it amounted to certainty.

Accustomed as the people of Ulvstan Bight were to storm and wreck and every kind of sea-wrought disaster, there was yet a new and appalling element in the impression caused by the loss of the *Land o' the Leal*.

It was not new that a woman should suffer shipwreck, that children should suffer with her; the annals of Ulvstan Bight were saddened by many records of whole families going down together, the mother with the babe in her arms; the father clasping his infant son; but that a girl not yet twenty, a girl known and admired as Barbara Burdas had been, should perish with the child of her adoption, her own little brother and sister suffering at the same time and in the same almost mysterious way, was harrowing to a

degree not surpassed by any catastrophe that had occurred within living memory. From the moment when rumour first began to stir, it darkened the daily life of the place ; and conviction put as it were a drag to the wheels of existence. During those hours if a man neglected his work it was considered a sufficient excuse if he declared that he could not occupy himself as usual with such a deadly certain uncertainty hanging over the place.

Once let the smallest sign be given, were it but washing up of the name-board of the *Land o' the Leal*, or of anything known surely to have belonged to the schooner, then anxiety would be at an end, emotion would die sadly and slowly down.

But no sign was given. Another morning broke, the day was gray and cold upon land and sea—no storm awoke the echoes that slept in the caves of the dark cliffs. The sea stretched from point to point, not calm, but with a sad, restless stirring ; the waves broke upon the land in a hopeless monotone, falling, spreading, sinking slowly back. At nightfall, when the gray changed

to deeper gray, the wind rose a little, wailed along the beach with a hollow sigh that now and then sounded like a moan; but as the darkness deepened the night wind dropped again, yielding place to a deep and strange silence, broken only by the plashing of the far faint wavelets. It was difficult for anyone watching them not to feel as if here at least Nature's sympathy were his. If there were no understanding anywhere else, at least there was understanding here; there was no mockery in the wind's sigh, no incredulousness of pain in the ceaseless *adagio* of the breaking and falling waves.

During a portion of this time David Andoe was with the fishing-boats to the north of Danesborough. He made no inquiries of anyone as to the fate of the *Land o' the Leal*—there was no need for any; the disappearance of the little vessel was talked of everywhere. If he could have forgotten, if his aching heart might have ceased for awhile from its aching, there was no opportunity. And his mates knew how it was with him; they understood why at nightfall he sat looking out from the bow of the clumsily-built little fishing craft,

gazing with all intensity across the wide sea-waste before him. What was he looking for? What did he expect to see? It was well known that the missing schooner had not carried even the smallest boat.

Often he thought of, often too he prayed, for another watcher. Even there out at sea, he had heard from a little fisher-lad of Ulvstan Bight how the Squire's son had never left the edge of the cliff, but walked there, watching and wandering precisely in the same manner as others, less than a year ago, had watched wearily for him. They had never spoken of that time, the father and son, but each had it in recollection; and it was a memorable fact that since then not once had any word of bitterness or anger disturbed their intercourse. The change in Hartas was great; but the change in the Squire was perhaps the more striking if rightly understood; the old acerbity seemed dead within him—where he could not agree, he was silent; where he could not admire or sanction, he would not see.

The most curious change of all was in his attitude to his younger daughter; yet this

had hardly been noticeable till after the 'catastrophe' at the Rectory. The Squire heard of his elder daughter's flight in silence, with much perplexity. He had never understood her, never seemed to wish to do so ; but Miss Chalgrove had always held a private opinion that his indifference to his elder daughter, if not exactly feigned, was yet not a real thing, and her opinion was strongly confirmed by the manner in which the Squire bore the tidings that came to Garlaff that snowy day. He spoke no word concerning them ; and when at last he spoke of other things there was a marked alteration in his voice and accent—it was as if some life had gone out of him, as if some cherished idea had suddenly died in his heart. And it was from that hour that he had seemed to draw his youngest child nearer to him, that he began to betray signs of uneasiness if at any time she were out of his sight for a longer while than usual.

It was to Rhoda alone that he spoke of the trouble that had fallen upon Hartas, of the way in which the young man was delivering himself over to a useless-seeming and most

weary wandering to and fro on the cliffs by the sea.

'Let him alone,' the Squire said, in answer to Rhoda's wish that her father would try the effect of persuasion. 'Let him alone. I know what it is. He's better there watchin' so long as there's a ray of hope alive in him ; he'll see when there's no more use i' hopin'.'

'He'll be out of his mind by that time,' said the brusque Rhoda.

'Not he,' was the father's reply. 'There never was a mad Theyn yet ; the first won't be Hartas.'

So it came to pass that Hartas was left alone to wander to and fro from Saxby Head to Penstone Point, a range of some twelve or fourteen miles of rugged coastline. Now he slept for a few hours in a cottage here, or stayed for a meal at some roadside inn there, or rested for a brief time by the fireside of some stray farmhouse perched upon the edge of the barren cliff. People began to know him, to question each other, and by-and-by the true reason of his wandering spread. Many of the people who listened had heard the story of his own escape, and were in-

terested in seeing him on that account alone. Others were more drawn by the idea of his present hopeless search ; for hopeless it was acknowledged to be now, since so long a time had gone by since the little schooner should have passed by Ulvstan Bight, leaving her 'passengers' at the extreme point of the Balderstone.

As a matter of course poor old Hagar and the two little lads were not left alone with their fear and their sorrow in the Sagged House. The Rector and his wife went there frequently, seldom finding the old woman alone. All the Forecliff would have been glad to help in such a case as this.

More than once Hartas had called as he passed, drawing the boys to his side, offering them his knife as a present, letting them look inside his watch as an enjoyment, but doing all this with hands that trembled before the children, for were they not Barbara's brothers, her own especial care? Had she not lavished upon them such love as he had been glad to know, aye, even the shadow of such great love. The little fellows were commonplace enough, stupid rather than rough, inanimate rather

than rude ; but the younger of the two had a decided resemblance to Barbara, a resemblance to be found mainly in the deep blue-gray eyes, which had in them a certain promise for the future. The lad would never be a clever man in any sense of the term ; and to his life's end it would be an easy matter for the veriest fool to impose upon him. Yet there was capability of a kind; capacity for being mildly good, quietly inoffensive. Hartas was drawn to this small brother of Barbara's. If . . . if the worst should be, he would be a father to the little lad.

'If' the worst should be! There was not another soul now in Ulvstan Bight or the neighbourhood but did not consider the worst a foregone conclusion.

And still Hartas walked there. The days had no names for him—no dates. He only knew that now it was light—now dark; and that always the great gray sea was void to him, having on its surface no trace of the sign he watched to see.

What did he dream of seeing?

He did not know, not any more than David Andoe knew. These men were each of them

too well acquainted with the ocean and its disasters to dream that *now* the *Land o' the Leal* might come in sight, her sails set, her colours flying, signalling to any who might be watching for her return, 'I have been blown out to sea!'

This, so easily brought to pass in a work of fiction, could, even as an idea, only have raised a smile on the lips of anyone living by the shores of Ulvstan Bight. Yet they continued to watch—some fitfully and at intervals; one, only one, quite ceaselessly. He would remain till some sign came to him, telling him that his watch was ended.

He knew now that it was nightfall again—and he knew that his heart was beating more faintly, his hope sinking till it might as truthfully have been called despair!

The sun had sunk into the sea, a faint pale gold orb of light into a rippling expanse of pale gold water. There was not a sail in sight, not the thinnest line of smoke to darken the gold and gray of the sky.

Though the evening was so clear, so transparent, yet not to Hartas Theyn alone, but even to others, there was the touch of sadness

upon it. It was as the eve that comes before some day of trouble, of deep pain.

And as the darkness grew, the deathlike stillness seemed to grow also. It was a solitude that brought no peace to the solitary man who yet went to and fro upon the cliff top; nay, rather did it seem as if the trouble at his heart was stirred to a fresh pain—a keener sense of agony!

‘To think of all ending *thus!*’ he said to himself—again and again he said it. ‘To think of all ending so—in darkness, in mystery, in ignorance, in suspense. Was there ever such suspense before? Was there ever? Every hour is a lifetime—a lifetime of agony!’

‘Is there *no* hope—none, nowhere?’

Then thought failed him while imagination dwelt once more, or tried to dwell, upon some last dread possible scene; the scene that might have happened, nay, that must have happened, as he now saw, on that night when the schooner encountered the squall not more than an hour or two after leaving Hild’s Haven. The most hopeful people had admitted long ago that the end had come then.

All the while the light was fading, the waves gently rising and falling; and, as he had done before, Hartas went down to the beach to walk by the water's edge. There, if anywhere, would be found some token—a plank of wood, a portion of a rudder, a strip of sail, or—or some other thing! Hartas hardly dared to dwell upon the possibilities that thrust themselves before his mind's eye. He was now searching for all he dreaded most to find.

He went down the cliff by a narrow but little-used and difficult path; indeed, it only led to a farmhouse in the hollow by Balders bank. There was just light enough for him to discern the steps cut in the clay, a bit of rude railing here and there in dangerous parts.

At one turn, to his surprise, he came upon a little lad, a child of not much more than five or six summers, who was laboriously climbing the steep steps, a big lump of brown tangle in one hand, a scarlet something trailing from the other arm.

‘Late for you to be down here, young man, isn't it?’ asked Hartas of the little fellow,

who looked up in silent stupidity, making no effort to answer.

Then there was a pause—a shock—an effort.

‘*What have you got there? What is this?*’ Hartas Theyn asked at last, touching (as one touches the cover that is upon the bed where some one is taking a last rest) the scarlet shawl that the child carried.

It was a very noticeable shawl—being made of crochet-work, and having a wide white border, with some black at the extreme edge of that.

The little fellow began to whimper.

‘I fund it—I did. ’Twere lyin’ on the sands,’ he said almost tearfully. ‘An’ there weren’t nobody there—no, not nobody.’

‘Tell me whereabouts you found it,’ Hartas asked, resting a reassuring hand upon the child’s shoulder. ‘Where have you been?’

‘Doon there—aside the wather.’

‘And this was lying upon the sands?’

‘Ay, sir. . . . ’Twere nobbut just oot o’ the wather’s edge.’

Hartas Theyn felt himself growing suddenly weak, as one stricken by illness. Only by

determined effort could he keep sufficient power to will and to do.

Not so long ago, wandering one night about the Forecliff, he had seen Barbara Burdas standing at the cottage door, the red shawl thrown carelessly round her, her strong sweet face uplifted as she stood watching the silver clouds that were flying past a wan moon. That was the last that he had seen of the shawl that was in his hand now, still wet with the salt sea-water, still smelling of the salt sea-wrack.

‘Go home, my little man, go home,’ Hartas said, speaking more gently and tenderly than he knew.

Then, moving as one in a dream, he went rapidly down to the beach, expecting (if indeed he expected anything at all) only to be mocked by the exceeding nothingness to be found there.

The child had pointed to a spot a little to the northward, and at once Hartas set his face that way. The daylight was gone from the land, yet out over the sea there was a soft silvery afterglow, and there, against the silver light, was a dark outline, the outline of a

large mass of something that was lying upon the beach. With beating heart and brain he still went onward.

He could never afterwards recall that moment when he first recognised that the darkly-outlined ridge was the upturned hull of a wrecked vessel. Quite black, quite lone, quite still, the hull rested upon the scaur to the north of the Balderstone, the dark line of the keel crossing a bar of silver in the sky.

Still nerving himself, he went on. He would assure himself of the truth—of the worst that might be true—before he yielded to the longing that was overcoming him—the longing to care no more, to strive no more, to suffer no more, to lie down and die upon the wrack-strewn scaur.

Then for awhile the afterglow that was in the heavens seemed to increase in intensity. Hartas Theyn was nearer now to the wreck of the schooner, and in the dim light it loomed as the remains of some large ship had done.

The stern of the vessel was toward the sea; and Hartas went round among the

slippery pools and the weed - hung stones among which the white-edged wavelets were plashing sadly. Quite near he came—his eyes seeming to throb and burn in his head, his heart to beat as if it must burst within him; for by this time the tide had turned and the water was rising rapidly. If there had been anyone in danger before, that danger was increasing with every second.

It was, as he had known all the while, the schooner in which Barbara and the little ones had sailed—the white letters on the black name-board attesting the fact. The inscription was, of course, upside down, but he did not need to read the words letter by letter.

The Land o' th' Leal: Hild's Haven.

This was what he saw; and then for awhile he saw no more. The temporary oblivion was most merciful.

CHAPTER LIX.

ANOTHER SEA-STORY.

‘ They know not that its sails are filled
By pity’s tender breath,
Nor see the angel at the helm
Who steers the Ship of Death.’

J. G. WHITTIER.

IF any member of the Psychological Society were desiring new ground for his interesting researches, it is probable that he could not do better than betake himself to the remote corners of the North Riding of Yorkshire. There are nooks in the dale country, there are fishing villages yet uncontaminated by railways, where investigations might be made, perhaps with results surprising to the most vividly expectant. Legends and traditions not only linger there, but are held with a vitality that is most instructive to the true student of humanity; and as a field for the

study of comparative folk-lore it is probable that this remote corner of the earth might be found to repay real research far better than others that are far more known.

Not altogether 'idle tales,' not altogether 'old wives' fables,' are these brief dramas that pass from lip to lip, from age to age. There are those who assert that Homer himself was but a singer of songs inspired by the traditions of his own day. Do we take the less account of him for that?

Yes, it is intensely interesting to know that one song, one story, one heroic tale, has gone the round of the whole wide earth like some gossamer circle, binding race to race here, throwing light upon the customs and beliefs of other races there. This is no place to enter upon the fascinating theme; yet it was impossible to avoid it altogether, since during those days of anxiety in Ulvstan Bight it was asserted everywhere that the spectre-ship had been seen crossing the Bight, not only once or twice, but assuredly the third fatal time. And after that, who should doubt? Who should dare to doubt?

That a ship—a tall, phantom-ship, with white, wide-spread sails—should pass thrice across the Bight before any especial disaster, was a superstition believed in by all the older people of Ulvstan; and the younger ones seldom expressed any open disbelief.

When old Hagar Furniss spoke of her vision of the night to the Rector of Hild's Haven she was met with neither rebuke nor ridicule.

'I saw it, sir, the Death-ship; I saw it wi' my oan eyes!' the old woman declared. 'An' 'twas noä dream. I'd been asleep—ay, I'd slept for hours, so that it must ha' been near midnight. An' when I wakkened there was a straänge leet at the winda—a straänge breet leet; an' I sprung oot o' bed an' went to the winda side. An' there it were, sir, *the Death-ship*, sailin' past wiv all her sails set, an' every sail like a sheet o' spun glass. An' on she went, glidin' by as never no ship went yet upon the saut sea watter. . . . An' then Ah knew 'at all were overed; 'at old Ephraim were tossin' doon i' the dark sea-tangle; 'at Barbarie an' her three little bairns were where they couldn't look

upon the light o' daäy. . . . And 'twere all past in a minnit or two. There were nought left save the sea an' sky, an' a dismal wind wailin' i' the winda where the leet had been. . . . 'Twere all overed then, an' then I knew.'

'And this was last night—Monday night?'

'Twere last night, sir,' the old woman replied sadly and seriously. 'I'd not much hope before—I've noän noo.'

Canon Godfrey stood thinking. He recalled to his mind the life-long influence in such matters that must have given strong colouring to Hagar's expectation. The legend of the spectral ship was, as he was well aware, cherished in almost every quarter of the globe. And remembering the poor old creature's intense and affectionate anxiety during the past few days, he felt as if he himself, in her place, might also have persuaded himself that he had seen the vision.

Not for one moment did he accuse her of deceitfulness, of misrepresentation. Some ship or ships she had seen, some white-sailed vessel gliding from mist to mist across the summer night; and her mind, apprehensive by

reason of her dread, had doubtless construed the impressive and unusual natural into the dread supernatural. He could not reason with Hagar ; instead, he tried to comfort her.

‘There are no tidings,’ he said. ‘But you must not forget what strange things have happened, even of late. It is not so long since the *Swallow* was blown quite across to Norway, and no news came for over a week. More recently still, the two fishing-boats belonging to the Graingers were lost in a squall ; one came floating into the Bight half-filled with water. Two days later the nine men, who were being mourned for so passionately, arrived by a late train. As you know, they had been picked up far out of their way by a passing steamer. . . . What should hinder but that some such deliverance should have been wrought now ?’

The poor old woman could only stand silent, shaking her head negatively ; deep in her heart was the conviction that her sorrow was that of those who sorrow for the dead. And she did not err.

It was on that same night, but a few hours

later, that Hartas Theyn, recovering from a temporary oblivion, found himself leaning upon the sea-wet side of an upturned ship. There were tears on his face ; in his agony he had wept aloud ; but to his astonishment—nay, to his appalling—there came an answer to his weeping. It was an answer that smote him to a strange and sudden coldness. As he leaned upon the hull he heard a distant and passionate, yet faint, knocking within, on the cabin end of the hull. He listened, unbelieving, yet again the knocking came.

In answer to it he cried—he cried aloud. But he could not be sure that he was heard. He listened, he went round the vessel and cried again, and listened again, yet he could hear no answer. But again the knocking came—twice, thrice repeated in the same feebly impassioned manner ; and Hartas Theyn took up a stone and beat a loud and long reply upon the blackened side of the little ship.

Good God ! was it possible that any human being could be alive there—inside a ship that had been tossing upside down by night and

by day upon that stormy waste of waters? If *one* were alive it was a strange, a miraculous thing!

Hartas Theyn was not a seafaring man, and he did not all at once realize his position. He hoped to do something, to accomplish some rescue, some deliverance immediately. Not one glance or two at that stoutly-built schooner, upturned there on the rocky shore of the North Sea, showed him all his helplessness.

And moment by moment that far, faint, entreating sound went on. It was as if some one were crying in low, despairing tones, saying: 'There is one here dying, dying! . . . Will you make *no* effort — *none*?'

Again Hartas Theyn beat out his reply, again he cried his willingness, his intense desire. And a sound came from within that was as the sound of a human voice, but whether of man, of woman, or of child he could not tell.

And even as he stood there the leaping of the white water about his feet awoke him to a fresh horror. The tide was rising. Within an hour or two this wrecked hull would be

floated off again : floated out to sea with its burden of human life—despairing, appealing human life.

He had no precedent to guide him in such a case as this. Wrecked ships had washed ashore, upturned and not upturned ; drowned men had washed up, and men exhausted, yet not drowned ; but that a hulk should come to land, turned upside down, and so every entrance to its interior closed while yet there was life inside, was an occurrence of unexampled horror. What *might* be done ?

‘*I can do nothing alone !*’ he cried, putting his mouth to a plank that he fancied had ‘started’ a little, and so might afford some ingress for the sound of his voice. ‘I can do nothing alone. . . . There is no time to be lost ! . . . The tide is coming up. . . . I will go and get help—a man or two who will help me to cut a hole in the hull ! . . . Keep quiet ! . . . Have courage ! I won’t be a second longer than I can help !’ So Hartas Theyn shouted, sentence by sentence, and at the last there was a pause. ‘Knock again, if you can !’ he begged. ‘Give three knocks !’

And the three knocks came—low, full of effort, eloquent of pain.

A strange thrill shot through Hartas Theyn as he heard them. He could not think—he dared not. One more word of encouragement he sent back, hoping only that it might be heard; then with swiftest footsteps he went back to the Bight.

He was breathless when he reached the little town. It was midnight; not a light in a window was there to guide him. Yet he found the house where David Andoe lived; and, to his extreme satisfaction, he found that David had come over from Danesborough to spend the night. He often did so, more for the sake of being present at the prayer-meeting in Zion Chapel than for any other reason. Whatever the cause to-night, he was glad to be there to answer Hartas Theyn's sudden and impetuous demand.

He had opened the door of the cottage at once, and stood there dressing himself hastily in the starlight as he listened to the strange story that Hartas had to tell. David was quite quiet and very pale, yet he did not lose a second.

‘I’ll get Fossgate and Joe Ganton, carpenters, both o’ them, wi’ their tools ready i’ the skep. . . . Come on, sir, ivery few minutes means a few inches more o’ watter!’

It might be a quarter of an hour later when some six or seven men surrounded the hull of the *Land o’ the Leal*. There was now no more fear that all human help that could be of avail would not be given. Yet those who best understood had most dread.

The tide had risen inevitably, and to a fearful-seeming extent. By the time the little band of men came to the upturned vessel, it was already floating.

David Andoe, making a desperate dash at a moment while the waves were receding, managed to reach the hull, to hold on to it, and to offer some slight assistance to Hartas Theyn, who had instantly followed him.

As the next wave went back three more men, each with some powerful or useful tool in his hand, managed to reach the wreck; and as they clung there, trying to make some arrangement among themselves as to the best method of proceeding, again the knocking was heard—that far, faint pleading sound that

struck upon the ear of each one who listened as only sounds from inside some vault or grave could have done. There was for these men much the same surprise, much the same horror, as they had felt on hearing some cry from below the churchyard sod. Yet they thanked God audibly that the sound could still be heard.

‘While there’s life there’s hope of life,’ David Andoe concluded; and no more time was wasted in words. The men set to work, one and all, hacking, hewing, with passionate vigour. Besides their knowledge of the construction of the vessel, of the position of the one cabin where alone anyone might be and live, they had also the oft-repeated but fainter-growing sounds to direct them. This told them that they were not really far from the hand that was making that pitiful and most beseeching appeal. Yet for all their effort they were not too sanguine.

To those who know nothing of the building of even the smallest ship, it must seem as if it should have been an exceedingly simple and easy thing to make entrance through the side of a little coasting schooner. The boring of

a worm can cause a leak to spring in the hull of a huge West-Indiaman. A sudden touch upon a rock will make opening wide enough for the entrance of water sufficient to sink the largest vessel afloat. How strange it seems that half-a-dozen men must bend their utmost effort for some time to cut a space wide enough for the egress of a living man or woman.

Some man or woman! To the last moment Hartas Theyn would not let himself think. To think would, inevitably, be to hope. A hope only born to die is one of the bitterest hopes the human heart can hold. It seemed to him that he already felt the touch of the bitterness to be.

CHAPTER LX.

IN THAT SAD NIGHT.

‘ Yet it may be that death
Shall give my name a power to win such tears
As would have made life precious.’

STILL they wrought there, making efforts more and more passionately earnest with each minute that went by. Only now and then that low knocking came, just to guide them, as it were, to where that terrible suffering was being endured. Very terrible it must be, as they knew, whether the sufferer were man, woman, or child.

They did not talk much, these desperate men. The rising tide, rising rapidly, caused a perpetual rush and swish of water. All the while it was advancing, receding, advancing yet farther. And the wind was increasing a little, wailing among the dark rocks, adding

to the ripple that was upon the water, lending a certain sadness and wildness to an hour that was sufficiently sad. No man there had known an hour so strange before.

It was past two o'clock when the clouds swept away from the waning moon. It gave but little light, being shrouded from time to time with the gray scud that was flying over the heavens. When it was freest a broad amber halo was seen to surround it, always an ominous sight to the fishermen of the North.

Pallid as was this light, it was welcome—most welcome to the men there on the upturned hull, riving, striving, rending most strenuously among the close-grained planks. They knew what they were encountering. They had not now to learn the strength and toughness of 'a Hild's Haven bottom,' 'the best and stoutest bottoms used in England,' so Dibdin had declared many a long year before. And more than one story of the tenacity of ships built at Hild's Haven passed through the minds of these men who were spending themselves in that work of deliverance.

Can it be realized that some hours had

passed before any opening had been made that could be called an entrance? All this while Hartas Theyn and David Andoe had wrought side by side.

‘And all the time I was feeling as if every stroke of my hatchet was striking down what was left of the barrier that had existed between him and me,’ Hartas Theyn confessed after. ‘I couldn’t understand it. It wasn’t *my* doing. . . . There was something about him, a sort of gentleness, a sort of tender-hearted kindness and humble-mindedness, as if he were wishing, all the while, to do something for me. He watched me every time I moved, saved me when I slipped, helped me when I climbed, and, as I recognised later, tried to make the night easier for me than it was for anybody else. When I remonstrated, he reminded me of what I had gone through myself, and not so long before.’

‘An’ you’re not as we are, sir,’ he added. ‘We’re used to the night, an’ the sea, an’ the wind, an’ to hardship o’ every sort. It’s nought to us—that is, the exposure’s nought. But I reckon we’ve noän on us knowed nought of a piece o’ work like this—ncä,

nought like this. . . . God grant they may noän of 'em know nought like it again.'

And all the while, as the men wrought desperately there, the waning moon went sailing to the land ; all the while the wind was rising, all the while the waves were advancing and falling and tossing. At last the fears that had been growing in the hearts of the men at work there took on expression.

'What were we thinking on—what *could* we be thinkin' on never to bring a boat, never to fetch noä boat!'

It was David Andoe who asked the question ; and the time was somewhere about three in the morning. The same question had been in the minds of the other men ; they had needed courage to put it into words. More and more they had needed it as the necessity for asking it became evident.

The hull had been floating some time—*now* it was drifting out to sea ; drifting with all its burden of life ; its two-fold burden—within and without.

'I've knowed it all along,' Joe Ganton said calmly. 'I've seen how it would be.'

‘ But you can swim, can’t you, Joe ?’ David Andoe asked.

‘ Ay—if Ah seed any good ’i swimmin’.

‘ Then you’re waitin’ to be asked ? This isn’t the time for it. Swim ashore as quick as you can, an’ fetch the first boat to be had for love or money, never mind which.’

This was not a difficult matter, but it took time, a longer time than had been foreseen. And it was time passed in pain of various kinds ; for faster and faster the ship was drifting out to sea, still upturned, still bearing its burden of life. But a new strain was added to the tension of the hour. There was no longer any response from the interior of the hull, and finding this there was no heart there but sank to a lower depth than it had known before. Hartas Theyn felt that the tools in his hand were now all but useless, and even David Andoe knew that he was becoming unnerved. Yet they strove on ; and to good purpose.

‘ Work away, mates,’ David Andoe begged. ‘ In another quarter of an hour we’ll be able to enter the hull, some of us.’

‘ Joe’ll be here wi’ Arklam’s boat i’ less nor that,’ was the reply of Will Hewitt.

But both men were mistaken in the matter of time. The moon was forty minutes farther on her way when at last an entrance was effected into the cabin of the *Land o' the Leal*.

Few words were spoken.

'Go you in,' David Andoe had said to Hartas, when at last it was possible for anyone to enter. And as he spoke David struck a match and lighted a tiny lantern that had hung at his belt. 'Go you in. If she be livin' she'll be glad to see you.'

Hartas Theyn, white, nay pallid, between the light of the dim lantern and the waning moon, looked into David's face for one hesitant moment. A thousand thoughts passed through his overstrained brain.

The task was not without difficulty—not without danger—this he knew; and this it was decided him to accept the offer made in all generosity. David Andoe would have been glad to go down into that dark depth himself, and he had done it with greater facility than could be claimed by the man who went.

He went with a prayer on his lips. The hull was beginning to toss a little wildly and

awkwardly in that dark sea. And he knew there were no means of guiding or steadying it in the slightest degree.

And there was yet no sign of the much-wished-for boat. Hartas turned to look out across the dark surging water as he took the lantern in one hand, steadying himself by grasping the newly-chipped edges of the planks with the other.

‘Put yer foot there,’ David Andoe urged, ‘an’ lean to the left—to *the left*, sir! Then forrard—a bit more forrard. . . . Hold the lanthron up! Ay, hold it so; an’ press forrards!’

It was just at the moment that Hartas Theyn was descending through the aperture made in the bottom of the little schooner, that suddenly, though perhaps not altogether unexpectedly, the hull lurched terribly to one side.

All happened, so to speak, in a moment. Hartas had entered the tiny cabin; he had discovered at a glance that it already seemed filled with water. But there, over on one side, was a sight to tax the manhood within him to the uttermost. He looked, he shrank,

he compelled himself to look again, and from his white lips a cry burst—a cry of bitterest anguish :

‘Barbara, Barbara ! for God’s sake speak to me—speak one word ! Say you are alive !’

The word might have been said, for Barbara Burdas was still living ; but it was at that moment that the unmanageable hull of the wrecked schooner gave a tremendous roll to the leeward side.

The girl was there in the cabin ; she had been there with the water up to her waist—nay, higher—for many hours ; and there, beside her, their little plump white hands clinging in her strong, beautiful hair, were the three little children.

Hartas Theyn did not know then that two of these little ones were dead. He did not know then that the small white fingers entwined in the broad red plaits had been entwined in the death-agony that had ended hours ago. Barbara knew. She had known it all, lived through it all, and was living yet. She turned her face to Hartas as he entered—a white, rigid, agonized face. . . . She could not speak. The dim lantern threw

but a faint light. Hartas saw the look turned upon him—that appealing, bewildered look—and he saw the other faces behind—one lying white and cold upon Barbara’s neck, but yet living. The others he had no time to see. No time at all was his, for hardly had he entered the cabin—already three-parts filled with water—when another terrible roll turned the wrecked hull completely on the other side. The water rose even as he looked—rose till it encircled the throat of the girl, and only by her utmost effort could she uplift the one child yet living above the lifeless forms of the two not alive. Hartas rushed toward her, seized the child—it was the baby Ildy—and with his disengaged arm he tried to reach Barbara herself; but she drew back.

‘Save the little one,’ she said in a faint whisper, only just to be heard above the gurgling, and rushing, and washing of the water—‘save Ildy; she’s the only one left to be saved.’

Save her! But how? The child’s fingers were not easily disentangled from the girl’s long wet hair; the other little dead white

hands, rigid, cold, must be left for some one else to unclothe. He would do what he could for those left living.

‘Can you follow me—can you make any effort to follow me?’ Hartas asked of the exhausted girl. But she only shook her head, and held out to him her two poor hands.

One may not here use the words others used freely in describing those hands. They had been used in knocking upon the rough inner side of the ship’s hull, so long, and with such agonizing effort, that not even the water that reached to the topmost beam might wash away that which is the sign and mark of the extreme of suffering everywhere.

In a few minutes more the living child was safe in the strong arm of one of the men outside; the two children not living were lifted tenderly and gently out from the water-filled cabin. Then, just as David Andoe and Hartas Theyn were helping Barbara, taking her from out of that dread and terrible prison-house wherein she had suffered so long and so unspeakably, just at that moment the boat was seen coming swiftly over the dark, gray,

restless waters. The waning moon had dropped behind the land, large and low, and having, as it were, a presage of ill yet to be in its weird aspect; but only one of these rescuers noted the strange light, the still stranger shadows. The boat came onward. It was received with a subdued shout of welcome; and as the rowers turned the corner of the stern of the swaying hull and pulled up to the side on which Barbara Burdas was lying pale, exhausted, at least one strong man felt the unaccustomed burning of hot tears on his face.

‘God be thanked!’ David Andoe said reverently, as he caught the delivering boat by one of the rowlocks. Hartas Theyn and another man were helping Barbara to rise from the wet, dark planks of the wrecked hull. ‘God be thanked!’ he repeated; and no one remembered any other word of his.

CHAPTER LXI.

‘AND AFTER MY LONG VOYAGE I SHALL
REST.’

‘Here is one who loves you as of old,
With more exceeding passion than of old.’

As Barbara Burdas was lifted carefully, tenderly, by strong and tender arms into the fishing-coble (the *Lucy Ann*, of Ulvstan Bight), she heard a voice speaking low at her side:

‘Your grandfather—where is he? Not in the cabin?’

Barbara hesitated, a sob escaped her lips, then she said with much effort:

‘No; he’s not there—there’s no one there!’

She could say no more. She knew that the one living child—the child of her dead friend—was yet alive; that it was safe in the arms of the fisherman who had seated himself

in the stern of the coble that was as an ark of safety; and it seemed to her, in her dread exhaustion, that there was little else she cared to know just then.

Nature demanded a time of oblivion—a time of forgetfulness of all that she had gone through—of all that she had been delivered from. To know that she might now not only cease from suffering, from enduring, from dreading, from hoping, from praying, but also from living, was knowledge to be grateful for.

She sank down between the planks of the boat, near to the man who was holding the child so carefully, and then, closing her eyes, she knew no more for awhile. It was well that she did not. It was not a long while; but it was long enough for that to happen which was to cause her and others many a long hour of bitter pain—of keen regret.

They were all seated in the coble, the rescuers and the rescued; her bow was turned to the Bight. The rowers had set themselves to work with a will.

The *Lucy Ann* was a well-built craft, and,

free of fish or nets, would have carried sixteen or eighteen men without being overladen ; but the *Lucy Ann* had no fair chance that dim, gray morning. It was really morning now. At first a gray dawn spread slowly across the sky ; then, as the sun uprose, a few faint pink and silver clouds shot pink and silvery rays across the sea.

The *Lucy Ann* had her crew and passengers all on board. The rowers, four of them, were at the oars ; but the craft was not, as was soon perceived, laden with due balance. The boat dipped deeply on one side.

‘ Wad ya mind changin’ yer seat, sir ? ’ Joe Ganton asked, looking to Hartas Theyn, who was on the starboard side of the coble, which was dipping almost into the rippling water.

Hartas rose at once, weak with emotion, unsteady with exhaustion ; and before anyone knew what had happened he had overbalanced himself, and was struggling in the white waves at the side of the fishing-coble. He could not swim ; and David Andoe, unfortunately for himself, knew that he could not.

David uttered no word; he waited one second till the Squire's son rose to the surface at the stern of the *Lucy Ann*, then he leapt overboard. And everyone in the fishing-coble was glad, for Hartas Theyn was saved. It was only the work of a minute or two to bring the boat round, to draw the two men on board. It was not till long afterward that they knew that one living man had been drawn out of the sea, and one man who was dead.

Why David Andoe had died in that perilous moment was more than even Dr. Douglas could say; but the doctor was Christian enough not to insist upon knowing—upon investigating what scientists would term the exact cause. What did it matter whether a vein in the man's brain had burst; whether a valve in the heart had ceased to act—of what value to anyone could such merely technical information be? He had lain down his life; and only the man for whom he had done this knew how surely David Andoe himself would have said ‘for a friend.’

By the time the *Lucy Ann* touched the shore of Ulvstan Bight, it seemed as if the

whole village must be there. It was nearly daylight now. A cool, soft breeze was upon land and sea; the tide was at its height. The coble had to be rowed quite close up to the quay on which the struggling crowds were standing, each one anxious to see, to learn if there could be truth in the strange story that had sped from lip to lip with the rising of the sun.

No one spoke as Barbara was lifted out; it seemed as if no one had courage to ask if she were living or not. A few saw her pallid face as she was borne away; it looked very rigid, very death-like. A murmur swayed through the crowd as of mingled awe and compassion.

The next to be brought ashore was little Ildy; and the child sat up in the arms of the fisherman who carried her, and smiled as she passed. More than one wept to see the smile, it was so wan, so weak.

There was much weeping in Ulvstan Bight that morning. As for Ailsie, the old fishwives said one to another: 'She were thrown back fra the sea, and the sea was sure to claim her again.' Still they shed tears for

her, for the little one had been loved, and loving.

It was not until Hartas Theyn had been assisted to land that the real truth with regard to David Andoe became known. Hartas himself did not know it. He had been sitting quite close to the dead fisherman: he had noticed not only the silence, the pallor, but that strange and inexplicable change that comes over the features when the 'fever called living' is over for ever. These things he had seen, and a great dread had come down upon him—an overwhelming dread. Was not the tale of disaster complete before?

Coming in over the gray waves in the morning light, listening all unconsciously to the dip of the oars, watching the growing beauty of the dead face, not knowing surely that it was death he looked upon, the remembrance of that meeting on the Scaur at midnight came over him with force; yet it was not a painful remembrance.

He could feel again the touch—the warm clasp of the fisherman's hand when they

parted. That hand was quite close to him now, but for very reverence he refrained from laying upon it his own.

And now—now he stood upon the crowded slip-way; and others helped to raise David Andoe, thinking that he must have fainted from exhaustion.

They spoke to him as they raised him from his seat in the boat, but he did not answer. One, more clear-sighted than the rest, covered him with a piece of sail-cloth : he did not resist.

Unfortunately for herself, poor old Susan Andoe met the small procession as it began to wind up the way to the Forecliff. Her cry rings yet in the ear of some who heard it.

‘Davy, my Davy!’ she cried passionately. ‘Let ma speak to him! Will ya? He’s my oän—let ma speak to him!’

She would have flung herself upon the roughly-shrouded figure but for those who were near to prevent her. All the way up the cliff she followed, and cried with tremulous lips and sobbing breath :

‘Davy, my Davy! If ya will but speak! Ah’ll be a better mother to ya, my lad—eh, Ah will! Ah’ll be a better mother nor ever Ah’ve been before! Nobbut speak to ma!’

CHAPTER LXII.

BARBARA'S STORY.

‘ His was the fate to suffer grievous woe,
And mine to mourn without forgetfulness.’

WORSLEY'S *Odyssey*.

‘ DEAR UNCLE HUGH,’ Thorhilda had written late one night in haste, ‘ I have just seen yesterday’s newspaper. What is this terrible story about a ship being found floating bottom upward, filled with water, and some Ulvstan Bight fisher-folk *still alive* in the cabin? Can it be true? Please tell me all particulars very soon. Are they, any of them, people I know?’

There was more than this in the letter—much more. Some things there were that made the Canon glad, and some that made him sad. The mere sight of his niece’s handwriting always now made his heart ache.

Over a week had elapsed between the disaster and the day when Canon Godfrey listened to the details as Barbara Burdas alone could tell them.

Inevitably it had been a week of pain, but Barbara wondered at herself that the pain was not deeper. She had stood in the churchyard by the open graves on that day when David Andoe was laid by the side of his sister, when her little Ailsie and Stevie had been laid to rest in the grave of their own mother, and through it all she had shed no tear.

Hartas Theyn, standing opposite to her, watching the white set face of the woman he loved, would rather have seen her weep. He had enough insight into her true character to know all that her apparent self-control meant. Some there were there who considered her calmness to be apathy ; others wondered if it were possible that the terrible experience she had gone through should have left some cloud on her brain, some dulness, some incapacity ; and in truth these did not altogether mistake, as Canon Godfrey perceived.

‘All that Barbara *could* tell she told me very calmly,’ he said, in writing to Miss Theyn. ‘She told me how the storm came on suddenly a few hours after they left Hild’s Haven—how the captain had insisted upon her and the three children being fastened down in the cabin.

“And he wanted my grandfather to stay in the cabin with us,” Barbara said. “And I begged him to stay myself, for I knew it was but little use he’d be on deck if a gale came on; but he wouldn’t listen—no, not for a moment, and Captain Baildon had no time to waste just then. I could hear that preparations for the worst were being made. After we were made safe—safe as they thought, I heard strange noises on deck, as if the sea were sweeping over the schooner, and by-and-by, sometime during that first night, a mast fell; I judged it to be the mainmast; but the children slept on through it all, all three of them—Ildy on my knee, and Steve and Ailsie in the captain’s berth.

“It must have been some hours afterward when the second mast went by the board. I heard the captain shouting to Peter Grainger,

and I listened for some reply, but none ever came. And all the while the schooner was driving on, rolling, rocking, tossing. I judged it was quite unmanageable. And all the while I was hearkening for my grandfather's voice, but I never heard it, no, not once after we were shut into the cabin. . . . I've thought since that perhaps he went soon on in the storm, and that was why the captain never came anear the cabin-door; no, not so much as to tell me how the night was going, or to ask if I wanted aught for the children. 'Twas not like him to keep away in that manner, and there was plenty of opportunities, for, as I said afore, 'twere more like a succession of severe squalls nor like a reg'lar gale; and every now and then there was something that was almost like a calm, so that anybody might have brought us a word of comfort, if there was any to bring, or anyone to bring it. I've thought since that there might not be, especially after that time when the captain cried so loud to Peter. It's strong in my mind that when the second mast went overboard, Peter Grainger went with it, and that after that the captain would be there at the

helm all alone—all alone on the storm-swept deck of that bare hull. I could see him, so to speak. . . . I can see him now.”

‘All this Barbara told me quite quietly. She seemed to be living through the dread and terror over again, and to have the same calm strength that had helped her and supported her then.

‘There was a pause in her story after she had seemed to see the captain standing before her. When she began again she seemed a little confused, as if not able easily to find words for all that came after. Hitherto she had spoken just as I have written, with an easy flow of words—simple English words—but evidently now and then echoing some phrase of some rather archaic book. Her voice is lower and sweeter than ever; her sad, simple manner is most touching; and naturally these new sorrows have lent a new elevation. *Lent*—nay, that is not the word at all. It will not depart.

‘When she took up her story again, she was like one awakening from a dreadful sleep.

‘“It must have been a long time,” she said,

“a very long time that we were tossing there, but I'd no means of knowing how long. I only remember that Ildy wakened now and then ; and I gave her a little milk so long as there was any in the bottle ; and when there was no more she fretted a bit ; but she always fell asleep again. The others slept strangely ; and I *was* glad.

“ “ Now and then there was a time of comparative calm. I heard the roar of the water and of the wind, but not near so bad as during the squalls ; and there was very little noise overhead. A chain rattled as the hull rocked up and down ; now and then some part of the dismantled ship gave a creak or a groan, and there was something that I thought might be a water-cask rolling to and fro on deck with the lurching of the vessel ; but there was no footstep, no, none at all ; and there was no voice. Once I thought I'd rise to my feet, and knock and ask Captain Baildon if he knew where we were ; but somehow I'd no strength to do it. And yet, no, 'twas not strength I wanted, but—but courage.

“ “ The things I was beginning to fear were such terrible things that I dreaded the moment

when I must find that they were more than fears.

“ I’ll never know—I think it never can be known — whether or no through all these hours the captain was at the helm or no. As I’ve said, I heard no voice, no footstep; no, not though I held my very breath to listen.

“ I can’t say how long that time that was almost a time of calm had lasted. I fancied at times that there was a ray of faint light in a chink overhead, but I couldn’t be sure. And then, as I listened, I began to be aware that another squall was coming on ; not quite so sudden as some of them had come, but I liked the sound of it none the better for that.

“ The wind deepened and hoarsened, and now it was like a long, low wail, and now it was like a wild shriek, and the hull strained and groaned, and it rolled and tossed, and I knew that the sea must be making worse than ever before.

“ Did I pray? you ask me, sir. I’d been praying at intervals all the while—not kneeling down much, for which I was sorry; but the

child was on my knee, and I dreaded to wake her for fear of awakening the others. I prayed that they might go on sleeping; and their sleep was beautiful to me. I could not see them, but I could hear their soft, reg'lar breathing. And once Ailsie spoke in her sleep—that was a way she had always from being a baby.

“‘It’s that lady, Miss Theyn,’ she said, in the voice that I knew to be her dream-voice. ‘It’s Miss Theyn; her that gave me the Christmas cards, and touched them all so gentle with her gentle hands. And she’s going up a hill—such a high green hill! and she can’t get up; no, she can’t. Oh, Barbara, go an’ help her; she’s slippin’ back at every step an’ hardly getting any further at all. An’ she does so want to get to the top! I can see why! I can see it all now. There’s a beautiful city over the hill, an’ she wants to go there, but she can’t get up that green hillside. Oh, *why* can’t she? Why? Will nobody help her?’ ”

‘This is just what Barbara told me, Thorda, dear. Can you put a meaning to it? I wish the dream had gone a little farther; that

Ailsie had seen the help coming! Isn't that childish of me? I am coming with the help myself one of these summer days.

“It was soon after Ailsie had done talking in her dream,” Barbara went on, “that the schooner began to heave and toss more fearfully than ever before. It seemed to be *plunging* through the waves as a wild beast might plunge through a forest. We were driven on and on, and now one side of the cabin was uppermost and now the other, and the roar of wind and wave was deafening by this time.

“It was just then that a strange kind of terror came over me. It was not—I do think it was not the terror of death, for I had given up my soul, with all its sins and all its shortcomings, just as it was, into the hands of God. And as for the little ones—well, I prayed for them too, and I'd no fear.

“From time to time I'd been saying a verse of that hymn, *Just as I am, without one plea*, and it had been as comforting as Bible words themselves, for of course, they *are* Bible words just put into verse; that's why they comfort one so. .

“There was one verse especially that seemed to come of itself; over and over it rang in my ears when I wasn't thinking of saying it. It was this:

“Just as I am, and waiting not
To cleanse my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee, Whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come.’

“I'd just been saying that, or no, I'd better say listening to it, when—when. . . . Oh, Mr. Godfrey, how will I ever speak of that moment? I've never spoke of it yet, never to no one. . . . But I *want* to speak of it. It will be better if I can. . . . Then, maybe, I'll not suffer so. For I *do* suffer. All night long that moment is before me. I live through it again with such terrible vividness that it has even seemed to me that I might die of the vision of things I lived through in reality.

“How will I tell you of what happened? . . . As I said, the dismasted hull of the schooner had been plunging onward, driven hither and thither for some time. . . . And a kind of terror had thrilled through me once,

just once. Then that verse came, and I was growing quieter, *when all at once I knew that the schooner was sinking.*

“I felt it going down sideways. There was change in the sounds all about, not a lull in the sounds’ intensity, but a dread and awful change.

“I wakened the children, hardly knowing what I was doing, but somehow I didn’t wish them to be drowned—to die—in their sleep. Heaven only knows how I repented of that deed afterwards. It would have been so easy for them, so painless. As it was, their suffering was very great, and every pang I had to witness smote me like a sin.

“I was telling you of the moment when the ship sank. She went over on her side, slowly. The water rushed into the cabin. . . . I tried to calm the children. My little Stephen was terribly alarmed ; and I had to give more attention to him.

“There was a table in the cabin ; and, unlike most cabin-tables, it was not a fixture. Seeing that it floated, I placed the children on it, and tried to keep it in one corner, but I could not. The hull was swaying up and

down *on its side*; and the cabin was half-filled with water.

“Ailsie was very white, but she was very still. Seeing that the water was up to my waist, she kissed me, and said, ‘You’ll take cold, Barbie, do come up here on the table.’ And to comfort her I did lean over, holding on by the beam just above. Fortunately there was a sort of iron holdfast driven into the beam, and I took off my apron and twined it round, so that the children might have something to cling to. But this was not for long. I cannot say how long. I had got Stevie quieted again. I told him of Christ walking on the water, and said that I believed *He* wasn’t very far away from us. Then he put his arm round my neck, and twined his hands in my hair, which had all fallen loose in the tossing to and fro. After a little while Ailsie kissed me again, and laid her head on my other shoulder; and her hands got tangled in my hair as well. Ildy was still asleep. She slept strangely all through the worst of everything. For some time, it might be an hour, it might be more, I stood there by the table. The water rose and fell with

the rising and falling of the hull ; it was very cold, and chilled us to the marrow ; but we seemed to get used to that.

“ Once or twice Stevie slept awhile ; and once or twice I sang, just little snatches of hymns the children liked. It seemed to quiet them when they grew frightened. But they were strangely little frightened : they didn’t know that all was overed ; and I could not tell them.

“ No, I don’t know how long it was before, at last, the hull turned completely bottom upward. It gave a lurch, the water rose all at once, it rose to my very throat, for a minute or two. I held Ildy up above it with one hand, and Ailsie with the other. Stevie was still holding by my hair, and that kept him up.

“ I knew now that the vessel was quite upside down, and that it was floating on over the sea, tossed to and fro in the storm. And I also knew that we four were the only living beings on the hull. No man on deck could have outlived the capsizing of the schooner. It was very strange ; I’d no wish to live ; and yet it didn’t seem right to die

till I was forced. Besides, I knew that I must outlive the last of the children. That was nearly all I prayed for.

“ ‘Twas a desperate time and long. . . . O Lord, how long! They say now it was only a day and a night from the upturning of the schooner; but then I can't think they know. *I* knew! Standing there with the cold sea-water up to my throat, and three children clinging to my hair, *I* knew. . . . O God, I'll know always! I'll feel those hands in my hair till I die! I can't tell you no more, sir; my strength fails when I think of it.

“ ‘I don't rightly remember when I knew that Stevie was dead. He died first, which you wouldn't have thought, him being so much stronger than Ailsie. But he died first. Yet his hands never left my hair. He was clinging to that when—when they found us. And little Ailsie's hands were twining close to his, so they said. I had known that she was dead. . . . Oh yes, I had known that for days.

“ ‘And I remember so well the last word she said. The water was swaying and toss-

ing about the dark cabin rather wildly just then ; and she was swayed and tossed with it, and the little one that was dead was tossing too. I think that pained me even more than the other. And I knew by Ailsie's voice that she was getting near the end.

“ “ ‘ Can ya kiss me, Barbie ? ’ she begged. ‘ Can ya kiss me just once ? ’ ”

“ “ ‘ So I tried to turn my head, and I felt a little cold wet hand pressing my cold face. . . And somehow the kiss was given. Then the little one drifted further from me, keeping one hand in my hair always. And the last I heard was a word of prayer. ’ ”

“ “ ‘ Lift me out of the water, good Jesus ; lift me away, for I'm tired—despert tired. Lift me away out o' this dark water. ’ ”

“ “ ‘ I did not know when she went. . . . For many hours I knew nothing. ’ ”

“ “ ‘ You know the rest, Canon Godfrey, how we were saved—the child and me. It is a miracle—more and more as I am able to think, I see that the saving of us two was a miraculous thing. Who took care of the little one, and kept the life in her, when life was all but gone from myself ? ’ ”

“Do you know I have a strong and strange feeling that her being saved was for some strong and strange design. . . . Will you think of that, sir—will you remember it? Will you write it down that I have said that I believe that Ilda, the child of Anna Tyas, was strangely saved from a strange death that her life might be of some especial use ; perhaps lived to some especial purpose? I cannot see, not yet ; but I think that I shall see.” ’

‘And God grant that you may,’ replied the Rector of Yarburgh, rising from his seat in Barbara’s cottage. It was hers only now. Presently, by way of parting words, he said: ‘You have asked me to note the child’s life. . . . I shall not be here to note it. . . . But I will leave the words that you have said in writing for those who come after me.’

‘*You will not be here?*’ Barbara asked, with lips whiter than they had been before.

‘No,’ the Canon replied calmly ; but seeing the girl’s distress, he added a word of comfort. ‘I shall not be here,’ he said, ‘but I trust that I shall be with those who thank God because they are at rest. . . . Yes, *at rest!*’

. . . You, yourself, must know what it is to be weary ; to crave for rest when weariness is a burden too heavy to be borne. . . . Think so of me, when you think at all, as of one only too glad to reach the haven where he has longed to be. . . . But I am anticipating,' he said, with a sweet sudden smile as he turned away. 'The end is not yet.'

CHAPTER LXIII.

‘AND NOW THE DAY IS NEARLY DONE.’

‘When the unfit
Contrarious moods of men recoil away,
And isolate pure spirits, and permit
A place to stand and love in for a day,
With darkness and the death-hour rounding it.’
E. B. BROWNING : *Sonnets from the Portuguese.*

‘A DULL little place,’ say some visitors from London, promenading slowly up and down the quay at Ulvstan Bight. Once more it is summer; once more the skies make a deep blue background, against which the white wings of the sea-gulls may flit and circle; once more the fishing-fleet lies off the land on still evenings, swaying slowly to and fro in the sunny yellow mist. On the moor, far up above the Bight, the heather is bursting into bloom; the foxgloves rise above the green bracken; by the stony waysides the

little blue harebell stirs and quivers to the light evening breeze. Late as it is a lark is singing overhead, and by-and-by a robin perched on a stunted hawthorn-bush chirps out a vesper song of his own.

‘“A dull little place!” they say,’ Canon Godfrey repeated half-audibly, and with a smile not free from pity on his face.

He was so glad to be ‘dull’—in other words, to have a time of perfect quiet, made more perfect by the exceeding beauty of the place and of the hour.

How long he had been up there on the moorland height, drinking in the fresh, free air, the welcome stillness, feeling his very soul within him soothed and healed as he stood or walked, and listened and gazed, he hardly knew.

‘One such hour is worth days of troubled living,’ he said to himself. ‘It is good to be here.’

But his enjoyment of solitude was almost at an end. Carriage-wheels were heard grinding slowly up the stony hill, and inevitably a momentary sense of annoyance came upon him. But this departed as suddenly as it came.

When Mrs. Meredith stopped her carriage to speak to him, he was able to lift a quite unclouded face. Yet, as she saw, it was a very weary face ; almost she felt a shock as she looked into it. Only the kind blue eyes were unchanged.

She had something to tell to Canon Godfrey. She had meant to announce it, but being softened by the sight of him, her mood was much modified.

'Will you drive with me a little way?' she asked. 'All the way, if you can. Won't the first grouse of the year tempt you?'

'The first grouse!' Hugh Godfrey repeated, in a quiet and meditative way. 'How cruel of you to mention it! You know that Millicent is waiting for me ; and though not exactly a henpecked husband——'

'Oh, hush! Won't I tell your wife!'

'Very well ; only come and tell her soon. Will you come to luncheon to-morrow? I am afraid I can't promise grouse—not yet awhile.'

Mrs. Meredith hesitated a moment ; and Canon Godfrey could hardly help watching her, wondering in much perplexity what might be the meaning of this great and

sudden change of attitude. From that winter's day with its dread disaster till now, she had never relaxed from her first severity of mood and manner. Certainly there must be some reason for the change.

'No, I won't come to-morrow,' Mrs. Meredith replied. She was one of those people who can be most graciously ungracious without giving offence. 'Not to-morrow,' she repeated. 'I have something to tell you. I will tell you now; and then I will accept the first invitation that comes from the Rectory afterward. . . . Not that I have anything to fear—of course not!' she added, with a short little laugh of superiority. 'It is quite the other way. You should be glad of my news; for *every* reason you should be glad. . . . Percival is going to be married.'

The Canon looked into Mrs. Meredith's face with a quick, glad, half-surprised look on his own. Then he held out his hand, which was taken warmly.

'You are congratulating me without knowing the lady!' she exclaimed.

'Don't I know her? Am I mistaken? surely not! It is Gertrude?'

‘Now that is good of you,’ Mrs. Meredith replied. ‘And it is so like you, to divine it all—to spare me the moment; yes, it is quite characteristic. And now tell me honestly what you think—as if you were my brother.’

‘Well, then, honestly, I am wondering which of them is the most to be congratulated. Of course, one knows what the world will say—this tiresome, worrying little world all about us. It will be said everywhere that Gertrude is the fortunate person—and truly she is fortunate, from a certain point of view—which she will be able to appreciate; *most* fortunate. But there is a good deal to be said on the other side. I can offer very sincere congratulations to Percival. Miss Douglas is not only a beautiful woman: I consider her to have an absolutely perfect temper—no light matter in married life. . . . Yes, certainly I can congratulate him; I congratulate you *now*—on the spot. I can hardly imagine any station in life that would not be graced by the presence of the woman your son has chosen to be his lifelong companion. . . . I can say no more.’

Mrs. Meredith was not often emotional; but

she could not reply easily just now. She shook hands once more, and more warmly, with the Canon, and drove off, saying:

‘I shall expect that invitation to luncheon; add a grace to it by sending it soon. . . . Life has not been the same since I was banished from the Rectory.’

‘Banished? You!’ the Canon exclaimed, his hat in his hand as the carriage drove away.

And long afterwards Mrs. Meredith smiled as she leaned back in her carriage, recalling the kind blue eyes, the winning smile, the charm, the fascination that was about all that Canon Godfrey said or did.

‘Forgive!’ she exclaimed to herself; ‘one would forgive him anything—everything!’

Then, a little later, when the distance was wider, the upland hills more deeply purple, the summer evening breeze more chill and sad, she added yet another word.

‘Forgive—forgive *him*! Good God! I say it in all reverence, I say, good God, forgive *us*, who do not know him—who cannot see him! It is only the reflection of his soul that one sees—only a most marred,

and hindered, and darkened, yet most beautiful vision.

‘I never see that man, I never hear the sound of his voice, but I wish to be a better woman—a more unselfish woman, and more self-denying. . . . And there is more than that. . . . What is it? What is the atmosphere that is all about him, that impresses one so? . . . Surely one can feel what it is—one must feel—it is the atmosphere *of prayer!*

‘One takes knowledge of him, *that he has been with Jesus.*’

* * * * *

Quite late that summer night a shepherd was returning from the town of Yarburgh to a moorland farm. It was a very bright night. The moon was nearly at the full, and shone out clear and cloudless from a heaven of deep dark blue. The stars were numerous and brilliant as the stars on a deep and frosty night in midwinter.

All the way over the narrow, stony moorland road the man went whistling, not from cowardice, but for very pleasure. The night

was so still, so bright, so warm, and so indisputably beautiful.

No, he had no fear, no superstition; and when he heard suddenly from under the stunted hawthorn tree by the moorland wall a cry, or rather a quiet and gentle appeal for help, he turned aside without dread. He stooped over the figure lying there; then, with a sudden shock as of pain, Reuben Lodge drew himself up hurriedly.

‘It’s never *you*, sir? — *it’s never Canon Godfrey!*’

‘I’m afraid it is, Reuben. . . . Can you help me? Can you get other help? . . . There is a dogcart at the Leas—isn’t there? But there is no need for great haste, much less for alarm. . . . It isn’t a cold night—and it’s not in the least damp.’

No; there was no need for haste. A couple of hours later the Canon was in his own study, lying on the sofa, and Dr. Douglas was there, speaking rough-and-ready truth as usual.

‘I’ve seen it coming; months ago I told you what that under-action of the heart would mean if you didn’t take care. And what care have you taken?’

The doctor's tone was a little harsh, a little brusque; but it may be that Canon Godfrey defined the source of the brusqueness. His reply was in marked contrast.

'Don't scold me, Douglas,' he begged gently, putting out a beseeching hand, which the doctor would not see.

Instead, he walked off to the window and looked out, saying, by-and-by, in a strange and unusual voice:

'Scold you! It's too late! . . . Would to God it wasn't!'

'You mean, that I shall not recover? . . . Well, I had not expected it, and may I be forgiven for saying I had not desired it.'

'No, that I believe—that I have seen long ago; but without being able for one moment to understand. . . . Why, what would you have? What is there in life worth having that you haven't got?'

The Canon smiled; then presently he said:

'Don't think me ungrateful, or even unperceptive. I have had much that many have envied me. I had comparative success early in life, and ever since I have tasted the fruit of that success. But one doesn't wear one's

heart on one's sleeve—not if one is wise—still less does one publish one's whole affairs to the world. I have not done so. And now at this late hour I may say that I have hidden cares and anxieties, caused by no fault of my own, but grave enough to have killed many men.'

'Doubtless—since they have killed you,' the doctor interposed with even more than his usual abruptness.

'Ah, well!' the Canon returned; 'it is evident that you are in no mood to hear my confidences to-night. You must give me another opportunity when you are in a better frame of mind. . . . But one word more; shall I send for Thorhilda?'

'By all means. Shall I write for you?'

'Thank you, yes; but don't say a word to alarm her. She will come without that.'

CHAPTER LXIV.

‘IN TO-DAY ALREADY WALKS TO-MORROW.’

‘The spirit of man is an instrument which cannot give out its deepest, finest tones, except under the immediate hand of the Divine Harmonist.’—PROFESSOR SHAIRP.

THE Canon had been disappointed. It was not his niece's step that he had heard in the hall, but that of Lady Diana Haddingley, a person who was almost a stranger to him, and therefore in his present state of mind and body a person to be almost dreaded. Fortunately, however, ten minutes of Lady Di's society had banished all the dread.

She was not now a young woman, far from it ; and her latest peculiar fancy was to dress so that she might be mistaken for a widow. Almost inevitably, since she had dressed to the character, she had come to believe in a sort of widowhood, and not only to believe in

it, but to act and speak out of her belief. Yet there was no deliberate hypocrisy in her histrionic display. She knew that others knew how it all was, and remained content to know. Still she clung to the simulated 'weeds'—the white cap, the black bonnet, the long veil that was neither crape nor gauze. Where, her friends asked, did she get such ambiguously lovely materials?

All her study, her research, was thrown away upon Canon Godfrey. He did not even remember whether she had ever been married or no.

Expecting, with a beating heart, that his niece might have arrived an hour or two before her time, and so have missed her aunt, who had gone to the station to meet her, he sank back into his chair with a new paleness on his when the stranger was ushered into the room.

But let it be said again, ten minutes of the stranger's presence insured her welcome for as many months, if the Canon should live so long. For once there was a little sigh, remembering that he might not count so many days.

Lady Diana Haddingley was one of those rare sympathetic women who can lend themselves—and this successfully—to any hour, any mood, any circumstance, and almost any person. She had not been a quarter of an hour in the drawing-room at Yarburgh Rectory before she was in touch with all that had happened there during the past two years. And it may be that in one particular her insight went even further than that of Canon Godfrey himself.

A light seemed to flash across her mind suddenly when the name of Damian Aldenmede was mentioned. She remembered a letter that she herself had written only a few months before, just about the time fixed for Miss Theyn's marriage ; and she also remembered Mrs. Godfrey's reply—a letter disclosing much more than the Canon's wife had meant to disclose. In fact, it had been so worded as to convey meanings of which Mrs. Godfrey herself was ignorant. Yet, curiously enough, these hidden meanings held the very core of the truth of all that had happened at the Rectory.

‘ Ah ! yes. I remember Mr. Aldenmede was here ; he was here ever so long. I told your

wife all the gossip I had heard from Sarah Channing. I didn't believe in it much, though. Sarah always gets hold of the wrong end of a story. . . . I dare say you know about it all. There was a fish-wife as heroine — the mother of half-a-dozen little fisher-folk. . . .'

'Oh, hush, pray say no more!' the Canon begged, not too courteously. 'I will tell you after about the things that must have given rise to such terrible gossip as that. It is worse than merely untrue. But, pardon me for asking it, can you tell me something of Mr. Aldenmede — anything that may be told openly and honourably? We saw so much of him, we know so little of him. But let me say that all we did know added to our admiration.'

'That was inevitable. But do you mean to say that you never heard of his great trouble — the thing that drove him from his country and his home, drove him to wander over the earth for years?'

'No, we knew nothing; we know nothing yet. But don't betray any secret to gratify curiosity of mine.'

‘Secret ! It was known all over Gloucestershire.’

‘Is that his county?’

Lady Di smiled.

‘You spoke of your curiosity just now,’ she said. ‘It seems you have not had enough to induce you to look into a certain book to be found in most houses. Don’t you know that your artist-friend is the nephew of old Sir Ralph Aldenmede of King’s Alden?’

‘No. . . . I did not know. . . . But tell me something more interesting than that.’

‘Interesting ! You might call for sensation and not be disappointed in the present instance.’

‘You are dreadfully trying, Lady Diana.’

‘Because I won’t come to the point? . . . Well, I won’t be trying any more. I will give you the history in the fewest words possible.’

‘First of all then, to go back about fifteen years—to the time when Damian Aldenmede was a youth of one-and-twenty; a very boyish youth for his years, but clever enough, and high-minded enough ; indeed, “Don Quixote”

was the name we gave to him in those days. I need hardly say that he was popular—singularly popular for a man who was not likely ever to be very rich, for Sir Ralph had two sons living then, Charles and Alfred; and Damian's mother, a widow of five-and-fifty, though well-to-do, was not counted a wealthy woman. I should say a couple of thousands a year was the extent of her income, and Damian's sole prospect was the reversion of that. But, as we always said, a couple of hundreds would have been enough for him; indeed, I do not suppose that he is spending much more than that upon himself even now. Still, his inappetence for spending money on himself did not injure his popularity—quite the reverse. He made friends everywhere, his especial friend being a certain Julian Haverfield, the son of a Lincolnshire clergyman. Mr. Haverfield spent most of his vacations at Massingham, Mrs. Aldenmede's little place in Gloucestershire, and we all knew him, and liked him. He was very fascinating.

‘Now comes the beginning of the tragedy. Damian Aldenmede fell in love—deeply,

passionately in love—with a governess, the orphan daughter of a provincial lawyer, and one of the most beautiful girls I have ever seen in my life. Her features were small, refined, and most exquisitely cut; to look at her profile was like looking at a cameo; and her colouring was simply the cream and carnation of Millais' baby girls. We were all in love with her; and she knew it, expected it, for the girl had no more brain than a butterfly. How such a man as Damian Aldenmede could ever have cared for her for three consecutive days puzzled everybody who could not see that a man who is also an artist is open to temptation on a side not vulnerable in ordinary men. It was the artist that was attracted first; the man was subjugated later. There must, of course, have been *something* more than mere beauty in Miss Florence Underhay—some gentleness, some womanliness, some indefinable fascination, or Damian Aldenmede had never contrived to make wreck of his life in the complete way he contrived to do.

'The tragedy might never have been so complete if his mother had not been as proud

as she was shallow. When she came to know that Damian was engaged—actually engaged to the governess of her late grocer (now retired, and living in a beautiful villa at Clifton)—her anger knew no bounds.

‘There must have been some terrible scenes, for Damian’s love and regard for his mother had always been noticeable. However, in the end, she disinherited him so far as she had power to do. She had a new will made, and left the greater part of her possessions to a niece, the daughter of a favourite sister.

‘At last comes the more dramatic part of the story. Miss Florence Underhay came to know of the new will, and from that day she changed to the man who was to have been her husband, who had lavished the love of a strong heart and brain upon her to an extent she had only found wearisome.

‘The end came quickly. One fine morning Damian received a double letter, two sheets in two different hand-writings in one envelope. The first he read was from his friend Julian Haverfield, a man he had loved as his own soul. The letter announced the approaching

marriage of Mr. Haverfield and Miss Florence Underhay.

‘The second letter was from Miss Underhay herself. It was almost brutally candid.

‘She had not deceived Mr. Aldenmede, she said. She had loved him, she had meant to marry him ; but learning what would be the pecuniary result of such a marriage, she had not hesitated in her decision to break off the engagement at once. Almost at the same moment, Mr. Haverfield, to whom she had spoken of her resolution, had made her an offer. Being a richer man than Damian Aldenmede had ever hoped to be, she had, of course, accepted him. She added that she had had enough of poverty, of all that was meant by narrow means.

‘In conclusion, she said, “I ask you to forgive me, and to forget me. I am persuaded that there will come a day when you will be glad that I have acted thus. I was no fit wife for you. For a long time past it has been a strain to me to live up to your expectations. You required too much.”

‘Imagine the blow to a man like Aldenmede ! His mother told me that she believed

the broken friendship was at least as much as the broken love. He has never been himself since—not the self he was before.

‘As a matter of course, Mrs. Aldenmede again changed her intentions as to the disposal of her property, much to the dismay of her niece, Clara Young, who was already beginning to be looked upon as an heiress, and had refused more than one eligible offer because she considered that such a fortune as the one she was expecting ought at least to secure for her a title. Damian has been very good to her since his mother’s death, and very helpful to her husband ; indeed, he is good to everybody.’

So Lady Di ended her story. She had told it in a very bald and crude fashion, as she knew, and the Canon knew that too, but all the same his heart ached as he listened.

Now he knew why the artist had worn always that sad face ; why he had, in a certain sense, striven to hide his real position from such as did not know it. Doubtless the man was hoping to win some love for himself alone, untainted by appreciation of aught that he might possess.

Had this also been a mistake? Had it even led to a new undoing?

There was silence in the room for awhile. In the heart of each of the two people there the same idea was pressing, and this with all the force of prophecy.

'They must meet again!' the Canon said to himself; and then in the quiet that followed he felt the spirit within him grow calm and sure.

'It will be well, it will all be well,' so it seemed that some voice was saying. And just then came the sound of carriage-wheels, the opening and shutting of doors, the words of welcome uttered by his wife. For a moment he felt overcome, but he strove and was victorious. A minute later Thorda was kneeling by his sofa, and her eyes were wet, her voice broken by emotion.

'Say you forgive me, Uncle Hugh—say that once again!' she cried. And, indeed, the agony of her mind was very great.

Till her sorrow had come she had never known how she had loved this man who lay there dying, nor had she till then dreamt of what his love for her had been. The past

few months had shown her all with a most vigorously bitter showing.

No day or hour had passed but she had missed his care, his tranquil, mindful affection. That other love, stifled half-successfully in her heart, had caused her less constant misery than this.

To be there in the old room, to kneel beside him, to hold his hand, to look into his face, was an emotion that for the time absorbed all others. She did not know when Lady Diana and her aunt went out, she only knew that at last she and her uncle were alone.

It was an hour she had longed for, waited for, dreamt of unceasingly. There had been no misunderstanding between them; but since that sad crisis in her life there had not been opportunity for the perfect understanding, the oneness of mind and heart she so yearned for. Now it might be—that perfect unity; if only for a little while. She did not yet dream how short the interval was to be.

It is better not to know, but it is well to remember all that knowledge might mean.

The next word we utter might be gentler and tenderer if we knew it would be spoken to one over whom the wings of Azrael were already silently spreading ; silent with the silence of the land beyond.

CHAPTER LXV.

THE UNEXPECTED.

‘Still onward winds the dreary way ;
I with it, for I long to prove
No lapse of moons can conquer love,
Whatever fickle tongues may say.’

In Memoriam.

THOSE were glorious autumn days. Now and then when Canon Godfrey was well enough he and his niece walked out over the moor beyond the Rectory, sauntering up the stony hillside pathways with leagues upon leagues of crimson heather on either side. The warm yellow sunlight heightened the tone of things near and far, the blue sea stretched quietly from point to point. White-winged gulls sailed lazily overhead on the one hand ; startled grouse whirled tremulously on the other. No other sounds disturbed the enchanting stillness.

On one of these days, it was early in September, the Canon was in a brighter mood than usual. He seemed stronger, able to walk better and faster.

‘ Ah, what it is to feel strong again, young again !’ he said, turning aside so that he might sit down to rest awhile on the top of Barugh Houe, an ancient British cairn at the top of Yarburgh Moor. It was a favourite spot. There was the sea he had always loved so passionately in the distance ; the moors he had loved with a love almost equally strong were all about him, glowing in their richest beauty, the crown of the year lying upon each moorland brow. And the free fresh air was as wine to the man whose wine of youth and strength had been drained prematurely to the lees. To-day he rejoiced again with a new rejoicing.

‘ It is almost worth while to have felt faint and weak and worthless, to know the joy of renewed strength,’ he went on. ‘ Life would be worth living if only to have a day now and then like this. I can hardly believe now that once, and not so long ago, life was lived always on such terms as these ! That I slept

at night a painless and refreshing sleep, that I awoke always as a child awakes, glad of the new day; my brain busy with new thought; my heart warm with new and expectant emotion. Yes. . . . I think I was a happy man, very happy. . . . There were hidden troubles; but I bore them—I think I may say that by the grace of God, I bore them well; *but I was not strong enough to go on bearing them*; and I fear now that it was because I had not sufficient spiritual strength. We know nothing of ourselves, not yet. We know nothing of the way the soul's strength acts upon the strength of the body. The strong soul is at peace. Peace means opportunity for growth, development for all that is hindered by tumult, by anger, by distress. Give the soul an atmosphere of calm, and all will be well. . . . And I am calm to-day, very calm. . . . But how egotistic I am growing! Thorda dear, how is it with you?

Miss Theyn was sitting among the crimson heather at her uncle's feet; a woman older by ten years than she had seemed ten months ago. It was a topic of conversation every-

where that her good looks were gone ; and for once gossip was not mistaken.

She was quite aware of her loss—what true woman would not have been ? She knew that she was thin and pale ; that her eyes had lost both colour and brightness ; in a word that she was faded and *passée* to an extent her years by no means excused. Yet the change did not distress her. She had passed beyond the possibility of distresses of that kind.

‘ How is it with me ? ’ she repeated. ‘ Well, I could almost echo your own words. I too have peace. Not perfect peace—it is not always with me. There are breaks in it at times,

“ When I think of what I am, and what I might have been.” ’

‘ But as I told you the other day, Thorda dear, I am very sure it is not a wise thing to live too much in an unhappy or mistaken past.’

‘ I agree with you completely. “ Not too much ; ” but, on the other hand, if one could forget it altogether, would it be wise to do so ? Is there not a sort of safety in remembering past falls ? ’

‘ Yes; if one doesn’t remember them to the point of depression in the present. I have seen a human being so borne down by the sense of past sin as to have neither hope nor energy left for even making an effort to rise again. It is not so with you, I know. I would only warn you, because I know your tendency to brood over the past. . . . Let it go, dear. It is possible

“ To be as if you had not been till now ;
And now were simply *what you choose to be.*” ’

There was silence while Miss Theyn drank in the beauty, the strength, of this most strengthening thought.

‘ Not *quite* what one chooses to be, Uncle Hugh,’ she said presently. ‘ The past must always have its influence on the present.’

‘ And the present on the future. That is the immense value of the present hour : it must in a measure dominate the hours to be. Yet there is truth in the poet’s word. One strong effort may save a soul on the brink of destruction. Think of Zacchæus, of the splendid picture painted of him by St. Luke. He had been drawn by mere rumour to wish

to see Jesus. He knew himself to be a sinner, an ungodly man, rapacious, cruel, yet the germ of good, the ideal, was in him as it is in most men. He wished to see Jesus, he saw Him, and more than that, was seen of Him; requested to come down from the tree into which he had climbed; and then (what *must* his astonishment have been?) the Master said, "I wish to come to your house to abide there."

"And he made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully."

' Joyfully, ah, yes indeed, think of his joy !

' There is often something touching, often something noble, even in the hated thing we call condescension. A man of high rank may condescend to one of lower rank, even the lowest, and gain an added grace in the act. Suspicion may be there on the one side and on the other; but if there be nothing to be suspected, the presence of suspicion can do no real or permanent harm.

' But the greatest condescension of all—the truest, the most noble, the most touching—is when one who has worn the white flower of

a blameless life condescends to one whose lilies of purity were dragged in the dust long ago. That is the one condescension worthy of note.

‘A rich man speaking to a poor man can have no human or spiritual aversion to make his speaking an act of self-sacrifice. A lady with an ancient and honourable title cannot really feel that the pure and high-minded woman in whose society she finds herself is really her inferior because of the absence of the outward distinctive sign of social rank. But it is different when you come to deal with spiritual rank.

“Know that there is in man a quite indestructible reverence for whatsoever holds of heaven, or even plausibly counterfeits such holding. Show the dullest clodpole, show the haughtiest featherhead, that a soul higher than himself is actually here ; were his knees stiffened into brass, he must down and worship.”

‘Yes ; he must down and worship. On his knees he must contrast the purity, the nobility, the peace, the happiness of this man's life with his own. Then follows the thought, the aspiration, “Can I become what this man is? Can I rise to his pure height? Can I find enjoyment in the things he enjoys? Can

my life be as his life?" So the questions come. Next, suddenly and strongly, comes the resolve. In the case of Zacchæus there was no hesitation. Too often hesitation is fatal. "Behold, Lord!" he said instantly, "the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore fourfold."

'And all this because of the sight of a pure spiritual face, the sound of a gentle beseeching voice.

'Conversion this is called, and rightly; but the word has been so misused as to be no longer rightly useful. The repentance in the heart and soul of Zacchæus must have been more or less rapid. Yet was it perfectly complete, entirely effectual. The Master Himself declared at once that, because of this sudden penitence, salvation had that day come to the house of the rich publican. Doubtless, of course, that hour was but the beginning of the new life—new and beautiful, full of peace, of happiness, yet neither untried nor unshaded. So it is with you, Thorda dear. Your peace—the peace you have won out of tribulation—is not unbroken, you say. How should it be

in this world? Have you even the wish for unbroken peace? Surely that would mean stagnation.'

Again there was silence for a time—not an unhappy silence on either side. The Canon had recognised the change that had passed upon his niece's character; how the channels of her soul seemed deeper and wider for the tide of sorrow and remorse that had poured through them, washing away even the very stains of the selfishness that had so marred her life before. The change showed in every act of her life—nay, in her very speech, and dress, and attitude. If less brightly beautiful than of old, she was even more graceful and tender, and her gentle consideration for others never failed her.

The Canon could not help the thought that came. 'Ah, if *he* could see her now!' And with the thought came the longing, 'Let me see them before I die; let me hear them speak to each other! I shall know; I shall understand!'

It was not strange that Miss Theyn's thought should be of the same person. All about them were things to recall the few

brief bright months during which she had known Damian Aldenmede. The blue far-off sea seemed to whisper of him; the purple heather rustling in the breeze had a wistfulness in its tone; and as the sun sank to the moor the voices all about seemed to grow sadder, to deepen the sense of her heart's real loneliness.

Long ago there had been an hour of awakening — an hour during which Miss Theyn had been wholly true to herself.

‘It was love for *him*, though I knew it not; it was love for Damian Aldenmede that led me to do a deed that must for ever have destroyed the regard he had for me. . . . Regard? Was it not more than that I saw in his face on that day when he said “Good-bye” in the garden at Yarburgh? I deceived myself then, or tried to do so; but why try self-deception *now*?

‘He loved me, he saw that I loved him; and he knew that I trampled on my love because of his poverty, or seeming poverty. He saw that I did that; that I encouraged another who loved me, and who had wealth, but for whom I had no love to give in return.

He must have seen all that ; *I know that he did.* Surely, then, it hardly needed that last suicidal act to destroy whatever of love he had for me !

‘ I loved him from the first, from the first day I saw him. I had seen no one else like him ; no one so true, so calm, so great ! I have seen no one like him since, nor shall I.

‘ No, it is over—my life, or rather my hope of happiness in life. But I may help to make others happy.’

So Miss Theyn was musing ; yet shall it be confessed that the conclusion, the last result of her thought, was less supremely satisfying than it should have been. But in extenuation let it be remembered that she had only just entered upon her twenty-fifth year. At twenty-five one’s opinions should be all settled ; one should be decided in politics, social science, and above all in matters theological. That one should then, at that age, have anything left to learn, much less to discover, argues ill for the completeness of one’s education.

Thorhilda Theyn’s education was yet in-

complete ; but sorrow and pain had helped forward the process most satisfactorily of late. Yet that she should not be able to find perfect rest in the idea of perfect renunciation was a fact that told its own tale. Life was still strong within her, with love of all that life means. Desire for sympathy, for deep affection, still held their natural sway in her heart. She might be strong to control the yearning, strong to conceal it ; but the power to destroy it was not yet hers : it might never be. Perhaps she hardly wished for the power.

Do we any of us wish it? We live, and are denied, and suffer. And when at last even the power of suffering is dead within us, what are we? What are we then, when all human and lovable qualities have been so crushed within us, because there is no one near to feel our love, to care for it, much less to try by tender human wiles to cherish it? What are we then?

Some of us who so suffer are simply what our friends make of us. We accept a frigid acquaintanceship—accept it with many smiles and much amiability—and go on living a life that is a very death. Others resent the entire

state of things, and grow bitter, and meet with only bitterness in return. In how many such might one find a whole world of genuine and generous sweetness, only wanting the one daring touch of that daring thing—a pure human love?

Again there are some, perhaps but a few, who are so ready, so bright, so light, so unconscious, or *apparently* unconscious of self, that pity or compassion seems the last thing they can need. They think of others so perpetually that no one thinks of them.

If we do think of them at all, we think how happy they are, how well-to-do, how free from care, and we give a little sigh of envy; and while we give that careless sigh the soul we breathe it upon may be sobbing out the last convulsion of a very passion of loneliness, of unfriendedness.

They wandered back over the moor—the Canon and his niece; and almost inevitably the latter was sadder than she had been when she set out. And it seemed as if her uncle's somewhat unusual brightness made her sadder still. Almost it pained her—this new enjoyment of an apparently newly-recovered strength.

It was as if some new life had been given him—new mental and emotional life rather than merely physical; and yet there was some element present not entirely satisfactory. Almost it was fear that Miss Theyn felt—unknown, not understood fear.

‘My bosom’s lord sits lightly on its throne.’

These words came to her mind all undesired; and even out of her own limited experience she could recall instances wherein this lighter sway of reason had but been the forerunner of tragic event. She was not superstitious, she was in the habit of laughing at presentiments; yet this evening, walking homeward over the moor, she felt herself to be more tenderly drawn to this her second and true father than ever before. She watched his lightest action, hung upon his briefest word, felt his smallest request as a binding plea. And Hugh Godfrey, if unaware, was not irresponsive.

There was a small fir copse to be passed through between the moorland and the Rectory. The wind was singing gently in the tops of the pine-trees, sighing and singing with a kind of low-toned organ note. Between

the boles of the trees could be seen the far-off silver light upon the sea ; a light that seemed not of heaven or of earth, but inherent in that wide world of water. Here and there a star was shining in the deep blue ether—shining silently, so far as human discerning could know.

All was silent save for the sighing of the breeze. Not a bird-note broke upon the ear ; if the wavelets plashing down upon the beach made any sound, it was the sound of a murmur so subdued as to make the stillness more noticeable. It was the time, the place, to cause an aching heart to ache with a more piercing loneliness. Whatever trouble the soul might have, that was an atmosphere in which such trouble must seem to grow, to deepen, to weigh with a heavier pressure than before. Why is it so? Why does the extreme of beauty everywhere touch upon the extreme of pain?

Canon Godfrey was resting, leaning his arm upon the low stone wall that bounded the fir copse at the western side. The gate was close at hand—the gate that led into Yarburgh Lane and down to the Rectory garden.

‘Wait awhile, dear,’ he said, when he first stayed his steps by the old lichen-covered gate. ‘Let us rest a minute or two.’

‘You are tired, Uncle Hugh!’

‘I think I am ; tired all at once. . . . It was so glorious out on the moor ; it is so glorious here!’

Miss Theyn saw how it was. The beauty—the unusual beauty—together with the exhilaration of the moorland air, had been together too strongly stimulating for the man whose strength had gone so utterly before.

‘It *is* glorious. Still I think you will see the glory of it all from the Rectory. Will you not come now, Uncle Hugh? It is growing late!’

‘*Late!* Yes, it is very late, and I am very glad. The evening has been so long.’

Not knowing why, Miss Theyn felt that her heart was beginning to beat somewhat rapidly, wildly. There was nothing to cause her apprehension, yet she knew herself to be growing apprehensive.

The Canon did not move. He was still leaning upon the old wall close to the gate.

‘Hasn’t it been a long evening—very long?’ he said presently, speaking in a strange, dreamy way, quite new to him. And though no words could have been less alarming, the sense of alarm grew in Miss Theyn, heart and soul.

She turned so that she could look into the Canon’s face. A crimson flush was deepening there, where for weeks, nay, months past, only the pallid hue of illness had been; the kind blue eyes were burning with a strange intense brilliancy.

Suddenly the Canon held out his hand, looking into his niece’s face with a pleading, pathetic look. He spoke with extreme difficulty.

‘Take my hand, Thorda! Take it in yours! It pricks? It stings! Can’t you feel that it stings? Don’t you feel it too?’

Miss Theyn was trying to hold the outstretched hand in hers, doing her utmost to overcome the terror that held her in no unconscious grasp. She had seen too much of late to be altogether unaware of the dread significance of the blow she had now to meet.

Yet that first moment was overwhelming.

She knew how helpless she was up there on the lonely moor, with no habitation nearer than the Rectory. In her distress she turned to see if any human help might by chance be approaching; and it seemed no strange coincidence that a dark figure should be coming somewhat rapidly over the stony pathway. Looking into the Canon's face again, she met no answering look. The eyes were still unnaturally bright, but all meaning was dying rapidly out of them, and the tired head was drooping helplessly to one side; the right arm still rested on the stone wall.

‘Keep up a little longer, Uncle Hugh, just a little. Someone is coming—a gentleman,’ Thorda urged tremblingly.

She knew that the gentleman must hear her, he was so close now, and he was coming toward the gate.

But Hugh Godfrey did not hear her. His head was sinking lower and lower. In a very passion of terror, Thorhilda put one arm round him and stretched out the other toward the stranger. What did it matter that he was not a stranger? that her hand was laid compellingly upon the arm of Damian Alden-

mede? What could such things matter in that dread moment?

There was no word of recognition ; nor was any needed. Damian understood all in that first glance. He returned the pressure of Miss Theyn's hand, not looking into her face at all, but only into the face of the unseeing friend before him.

‘Do your best to support Mr. Godfrey for a few minutes,’ he begged. ‘I will have help here immediately.’

CHAPTER LXVI.

AS A TALE THAT IS TOLD.

‘ One cannot judge
Of what has been the ill or well of life
The day that one is dying—sorrows change
Into not altogether sorrow-like.
I do not see sadness ; but scarce misery,
Now it is over, and no danger more.’

THE night following that evening upon the moorland hills was a strange but not un-beautiful time at Yarburgh Rectory. All night three persons had kept watch in a quiet room. The dying man’s wife had borne the ordeal well ; and his niece had endured not less than worthily, considering the extreme of her suffering. Each of these women knew that they had been strengthened by the presence of a man whose experience of suffering had been long and varied.

When the morning came it seemed to Miss

They had been by her side for weeks or months. Every look of his was understood, every gesture.

In the brain of each there was a kind of dumb surprise that the anticipations of months should all have been overruled by the event of one single moment.

The meeting (inevitably each of them had felt assured that they must meet some day) had been rehearsed on either side, with details and circumstances now hopeful, and now most unhelpful, according to the mood of the dreamer. Not one event had come to pass in accordance with any dream.

It was a careless word in a careless letter that had brought Damian Aldenmede to England. He had expected to find Miss Theyn in the home of her friend Mrs. Thurstone, and had arrived there on the very day on which the telegram had been received stating that the Canon was less well than usual. He had followed Miss Theyn as far as Danesborough, and there he had stayed making earnest inquiries day by day. So it was that he had appeared at a moment when he was most needed, least expected.

'Certainly Fate is kind to one sometimes,' he said to Miss Theyn, as they stood together by the fire in the Canon's room, at midnight.

'Fate?' she said inquiringly, lifting a calm white face to his grave countenance, bent down a little to hers.

'You know how I meant the word. We do not need to discuss that, you and I. No day of my life is lived but I am impressed the more with belief in a personal Providence—the Providence of a God who has given me that day, and will require an account of it.'

Miss Theyn was silent for awhile, and a little sad.

'Is not the thought almost *too* impressive for every-day use for everyone of us?' she said at last. 'We can bear it just now, because we stand in the presence of one who has never lost the thought, and is going to his rest now willingly, gladly, because he has not. I speak of common days, of more ordinary hours. Is not the thought too heavy?'

'Not, surely, if we take it rightly. To be impressed is not *necessarily* to be depressed. Nay, for me the darkest hours and the

lightest, the brightest, may mingle their diverse elements with no incongruity. Is not this such an hour for both of us? Will you not let it be such?’

Damian Aldenmede paused then, watching the face of the woman he loved, seeing its expression change in the firelight from deepest calm to almost painful confusion. The change distressed him.

‘You have suffered enough,’ he said, taking Thorhilda’s hand in his, and holding it tenderly. ‘And I can well understand that this hour is one that must have yet more of suffering in it. Yet the joy, the extreme of happiness, may be all the deeper, the keener, for this sublimation of pain. May it not be so? We are here, by the side of one who has lived, and loved, and suffered, and whom we both love; and he is going from us—going into that silent land whither we must one day follow him. Will you not let him have the happiness of knowing of our happiness before he leaves us? Indeed, I have fancied he was waiting for the knowledge, hoping for it! You will let me speak of it to him?’

Thorhilda was pale and tremulous, yet she looked up as if she would search the face that was watching hers.

‘You can ask this—you can wish it—knowing all?’

He would not affect to misunderstand her.

‘Yes, knowing all; and partly because of my knowledge,’ he replied. ‘And not forgetting that I myself was to blame for much of your suffering. Is it vanity to think that if I had told you, or given you to understand at the very first that my love was yours—yours from the first hour I met you—is it vanity to think that all would have been different? Do not answer me if an answer would be pain. I have other things to confess; and it may be that my confession will be in some sense an extenuation. If I had not suffered, if the remembrance of my suffering had not been strong upon me, I had not refrained from trying to win your affection. And that another should be trying to win it was a possibility I could not face. The news came upon me like a shock—a far more terrible shock, let me say it, than I received on hearing that you had at last thought and

acted for your better self. Forgive me if I speak too plainly—it is better. Let all be fair between us, all quite open. There is much in my past that is painful—nothing that I cannot tell you. And as for you, there is nothing that you need say—not a word. I know it all.’

Again there was effort on Miss Theyn’s part.

‘Yes, you must know,’ she said presently. ‘And I am glad that it is so. I have not strength just now to lay bare all my past weakness, my past ignorance, as I should wish to do. Such strength only comes by moments at a time.’

‘Then wait for the time, dear!’

‘Yes, I must. I must some day tell you how, when I began to feel your affection, I yet would not let myself yield to the spell of it, and all because I dreaded poverty—simply that—the dread of the effort, and self-denial of poor living.’

‘And now you dread that no longer?’

The question was asked in all sincerity. Damian Aldenmede had ascertained how much of the actual state of his circumstances had

been communicated to Miss Theyn by Mrs. Thurstone, how much by Lady Diana Haddingley. Each of these ladies had said nearly all she knew; neither had known the truth.

So it was that when Thorhilda Theyn gave her word of promise to the artist who had won her love, she knew but little more than that he was a man of good birth, but of somewhat fallen fortune. Later she knew his whole life-story, not as told by Lady Di Haddingley or another. He told her all himself. But that night she was content to know nothing save that her life's one love was returned, and that nothing now stood in the way of her future happiness. Her future happiness! It was a happiness that dominated even the present hour of pain. A little later, as she stood by Canon Godfrey's bed-side, Damian Aldenmede at her right hand, the Canon saw how it was with them, and the smile on his wan, white face expressed all his satisfaction.

'I have wished for this: I have wished to know,' he said, speaking with effort. 'Dear Thorda, this atones for all—for all my weakness, my cowardice!'

‘Hush, Uncle Hugh! The weakness was mine, only mine! It was you who saved me. But for you I had exchanged my soul, my very soul, for a mess of pottage—the pottage of an easy competence.’

‘And how many lives are wrecked on that same rock!’ the Canon replied. He was lying back on the white pillows that propped him to a half-sitting posture. The thin, golden-brown hair streaked with white curled upon his wet forehead. The blue eyes shone brightly, intensely, as with deepest fervour of living, with keenest fervour of suffering.

‘Ah, yes, how many lives are wrecked there! It is a rock the poor, the very poor, are saved from as certainly as the rich. *They*, God help them, are content to live from day to day, happy so that they do not suffer actual starvation. It is the class, or rather the classes, next above that suffer really. They cannot beg, they can seldom borrow, they can do little but suffer in silence. So it is that they are tempted. . . . If you can, Thorda dear, help those—those who do not complain, who do not ask, who do not come before societies

—yes, always help such as put a brave face on their poverty.’

‘There I can give you some little comfort, Uncle Hugh. I think I may say that I have learned to look below the surface. So you see that your life has not been lived in vain, so far as I am concerned. There are others, many others, who will say the same. . . . Will any say it so truly, so sadly as I do?’

‘*Sadly*, Thorda dear?’

‘Yes, very sadly, for much of the light you gave me I refused to follow—yes, I refused till the very last. That was my sin. It has had its punishment, as all wilful sin must have—sin committed against light, in the midst of light.’

‘But that is over now, dear.’

‘No, it is not, Uncle Hugh. It never can be. I would not wish that it should. All my life must be the sadder, the less bright and beautiful for the shadow of that remembered sin. I believe it to be a sin forgiven, but I would not even wish it forgotten. It will keep me low, when temptation to spiritual pride would lift me higher than it would be safe for me to go. . . . No, I can never for-

get ; I would not if I could. . . . But now for a while let us forget ourselves—our present selves. . . . I have been thinking of Hartas. Would you not wish to see him, Uncle Hugh? . . . I know he will be wishing intensely to see you.'

The Canon smiled and clasped his niece's hand ; then he drew from underneath his pillow an envelope addressed to his nephew, Hartas Theyn. It enclosed a letter written with much difficulty, and during keen bodily anguish. The Canon passed it to Damian Aldenmede.

'Will you take this to Hartas?' he said. 'Will you take it *now*? It is a request that he will come and see me, and that if it seem good to him and to Barbara Burdas they will come together. You can understand.'

CHAPTER LXVII.

AT DAWN OF DAY.

‘ Weep not ; O friends, we should not weep :
Our friend of friends lies full of rest,
No sorrow rankles in his breast.’

THE sun had risen above the eastern sea with a soft, gray, gentle radiance, lighting all the far faint waters with a silvery glow that seemed tenderer and more poetic by far than the more dazzling and aggressive tints of rose and daffodil that often mark the rising of the sun above the northern ocean.

There is far less variation than might be deemed in this same cloud scenery. For that one whole summer a certain purple bar of cloud edged with amber rested athwart the eastern horizon from sunset to almost sunrise. Evening after evening the orb went down into the sea to the north-west, glowing

under that heavy slanting bar, and morning by morning, but some two or three hours later, the sun uprose under the shadow of the same cloud, which had moved slowly to the north-east, and now was edged with rose-pink, now with golden-yellow, now with palest silvery gray. It was of this faint silver tone that morning when Canon Godfrey asked that his narrow iron bedstead might be wheeled to the side of the open window. And even as he lay there with clasped hands, uplifted eyes, and fervid, prayerful lips, his name was being urged pleadingly by another.

‘Come with me, Barbara,’ Hartas Theyn was saying. He had come over from the Grange before daylight, holding in his hand the letter that Damian Aldenmede had brought to him.

‘Come with me,’ Hartas repeated. ‘Look at this letter; it is my Uncle Hugh’s. He knows all. He speaks of his faith in you; he alludes to his hope for me. . . . But even now, be yourself, Barbara. Don’t let your regard for him lead you to be untrue to yourself.’

Barbara listened, white, pallid, yet strong

in her own pure consciousness of purest intention.

Since that terrible time when she had been rescued from suffering, if not from death, partly by the effort of Hartas Theyn, she had been more than ever sure of her feeling toward him. But in her inmost heart she admitted that not that night, nor another, had been needed for the conquest of her affection.

‘It is no use—no use at all attempting to conceal it from myself. I love him—I have loved him always, and all the more because there was no one else to love him truly, to see the good in him—the good that only needed trial and trouble to bring it out. . . . Now all the world—that is, the little world about us—sees how good he is, how brave, how strong!’

All these thoughts, and many others, passed through the heart and brain of Barbara as she stood there by the little gate at the top of the steps in the growing dawn-light.

‘I will be ready in a minute or two,’ she said presently. ‘I must ask old Hagar to come in and look after Ildy and Jack. Then

I will go with you. . . . Be patient for a little while !'

She smiled, rather sadly, as she spoke ; the need for patience was evidently so strong in Hartas Theyn. To this day the need is his. If he waits while his wife addresses a letter he walks up and down the room, chafing as a man might chafe who awaited a warrant ordering all his future fate. You might imagine that every line contained a decretal, 'To be or not to be,' affecting the continuance of his future life.

The sun was yet only fairly risen above the top of the eastern cliffs when Barbara and Hartas Theyn entered the Rectory gates. Bab had put on her mourning dress, a plain black gown and a simple black bonnet, almost innocent of trimming, and lamentably far from the fashion of the hour. But of this she was not aware ; nor was anyone who saw her aware. Canon Godfrey, looking upon her as she entered his room, as she came and stood by the bed where he lay dying, held out his hand with the warmth, the respect he had shown to the noblest woman of his acquaintance. If the question

had been asked of him, he would in all probability have said, 'I know no greater, nobler woman than Barbara Burdas.'

She quite understood why it was that the Canon had wished to see her in these, the last moments of his life. From the beginning she had understood his wish; been glad, proud of his appreciation. In the darkest hours of her life the belief that he believed in her had been as a strong spiritual stimulant.

The sun was shining across the room by this time, throwing a halo of light all about the pillow of the dying man. The shadow of the trees but just outside flickered and danced upon the wall; upon the ivory-white hangings that were all about the bed; and the light was of that fresh inspiring kind that marks certainly the beginning of the day. No true nature-lover can ever be deceived as to the difference between the vivid brightness of the rising sun, and the subdued keenness of the sun that is setting. There is not even similitude.

'I knew you would come,' the Canon said, lifting his still blue and kindly eyes to Barbara's face. There was a smile on his

lip, the old warm, winning smile; but Barbara had much ado to prevent responsive tears. 'I knew you would come—you and Hartas. It seemed so necessary that I should see you again; that I should know before I go how it is to be with you. Hartas! Barbara! . . . Is the word said—the one word that is to decide all? . . . If it is not, can you tell me why? Is there anything I can say to make that word easier to either of you?'

It was a strange hour. It seemed as if it were only yesterday that he had astonished his wife by saying, 'I am not sure that I should consider Hartas's marriage to Barbara Burdas such a great calamity!'

And how much had happened since then! And mostly the events had justified his saying. The change in Barbara herself was not greater than the change in the Squire's son, and everywhere people were attributing these changes to their rightful source. Yes, it was a strange hour, and never to be forgotten.

It was Barbara who replied to the Canon's question. At that moment she was the stronger of the two, and seeing Hartas's white face by the foot of the bed, his dark

eyes lifted pleadingly to hers, his mute white lips almost tremulous, she smiled, and spoke for him as for herself.

‘No, the word has never been said—the word that you ask about. How should it have been said? For from the time that it was possible, that is to say, the time when your nephew helped to save me and mine from a terrible death, he has given me no chance to say it. . . . Is not that true, Mr. Theyn?’

The pale face at the lower end of the bed flushed with a tremulous pain.

‘If the question hasn’t been put into words, I think you have known *why*,’ the young man said, speaking awkwardly enough, yet not without pathos in his accent and appeal.

Barbara could only blush the more deeply, and look down in silence.

‘Say it’s true, Barbara!—that you’ve never given me the chance to speak—not a fair chance—since you must have known I couldn’t *presume* after that night out in the roads.* ’Twas for you to give way a little

* ‘Roads,’ a common term for the sheltered waters off a seaport or shallow bay.

then—to make some opening. I've waited for it, I've waited all along, and no one can say I haven't waited patiently !'

'It's just as I thought!' the Canon said. 'It is all just as I imagined it to be. . . . But, oh, how foolish you have been ! Life is very short; it is very full of pain, of suffering, of all that calls for human fortitude and endurance. Therefore it is that it seems to me that no crumb of happiness, of true happiness, should ever be permitted to fall to the ground. And you are wasting yours—both of you. Was it needful that I should die ? that I should lie here in a brief waiting space, waiting for the friend "I travel to meet ?" Was this to be before I could see you together, urge you not to waste one more day of possible happiness ? . . . Ah, how strange it is !'

The Canon was not impatient. The truth was written on each of the two true faces beside him ; and it was the very truth that he had longed to see, to know.

In the silence that followed, Hartas came round to the side of the bed where Barbara had hitherto stood alone, quite near to the

Canon. In the nervous awkwardness but natural to her she had refused to sit down. Hartas held out his hand, a strong, brown hand, and he looked into her face as he offered it.

Perhaps it was better that he did not speak. Barbara saw the palpitating tremor—it was almost fear—as if he knew that that one moment must decide everything.

It was a strong and deep silence that followed. The Canon looked from the one face to the other, then he smiled, and holding out his own hand, he clasped the two hands that had already met, binding them there in his own warm, almost convulsive clasp.

‘It is decided then?’ he said. ‘You are one? . . . I go with this knowledge?’

Hartas placed his other hand upon the one that Barbara had left in the Canon’s grasp.

‘You will yield *at last*?’ he said, looking into the strong, suffering face of the girl. ‘Say that you will! You shall not repent, Barbara. Every hour of all my future life shall be set to make your life in this world

happy—both our lives happy in the world to be! . . . Say a word, only one; you have it in your power to make—well, I was going to say hell or heaven of the days to come. But that would be going beyond the truth; and there is no need for that. The simple truth lies deep enough between us two. . . . You yield *at last*?

The final word had been uttered with extreme difficulty, as Barbara saw and heard, and with equal difficulty she replied to it.

‘I will be your wife,’ she said, almost sobbing out the words, yet controlling herself with all the strength left to her. And, as each one then felt, the betrothal was almost as a sacrament, being solemn and holy and binding. A light word, a careless smile, had jarred upon the sense of any one assembled in that room as the passing of some evil thought had jarred upon the soul.

‘It is decided, then?’ the Canon said presently. ‘You will make each other happy?’

‘I will do my best,’ Hartas replied, speaking with evident effort.

Barbara only smiled gravely. She had no more words at her command just then.

‘I believe that you will—that you will do the very best it is in your power to do,’ Canon Godfrey replied, turning to Hartas. ‘And I do not think that words of mine are needed now to show you what that best means. . . . After all, life is very simple for the most part, and when it is complex the simplest heart and mind sees its way most clearly. . . . I have not strength left to say much more ; but let me impress two things upon you. The first is this : hold fast by prayer. If you are well, and happy, and all is going smoothly, thank God in prayer. If you are fearful, and doubtful, and tremulous for the future, take all your doubt and fear to One who alone can understand. Take it there, and leave it there—nay, remain there yourself.

“ Safe on the steps of Jesu’s throne,
Be tranquil, and be blest.”

‘What a picture that is in two brief lines for a soul worn, wearied, suffering ! But it is not given to us to stay there long—at the

foot of the Great White Throne. We have to come down from such mountain heights as these to face the fight in the valley below, the valley of every-day life, every-day endurance, every-day suffering and self-denial. . . . And that brings me to the second thing I have to say—the force and the power that is to be *bought* by the mere denial to one's self of things lawful in themselves.

‘I have not strength left to say all I would wish to say on this head, but let me urge at least this, that you will make trial of judicious self-restraint even in common things. It may be that you have done much, it is joy to me to believe that you have, yet to all of us there remain heights not yet attempted. And when we have gained them, the last of them in sight at starting, we find that there are yet others beyond ; so it is that the allurements of the spiritual life lead us on from the world that now is to the world that is to be. And how grateful we should be for such gradual drawing ! . . . Only let us always try to respond to the least and faintest call from the spirit-

world which is but just outside ; let us never fail to be responsive. .

‘ We are more than we seem ; the worst, the lowest, the weakest human soul among us is more than we deem it to be.

“ Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting,
The soul that rises with us,—our life’s star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar.
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home.” ’

CHAPTER LXVIII.

‘LET US ARISE, AND GO.’

‘Is it deep sleep, or is it rather death ?
Rest anyhow it is, and sweet is rest.’

ONE day, not many weeks before, the Canon had asked to have a curious little fancy gratified. In the room that had been Thorhilda’s schoolroom there was an old piano which had belonged to his mother. It had not been much used of late ; it might not be in good tune ; yet its notes had a lingering, old-fashioned sweetness of their own.

‘Have it brought downstairs for me, Millicent dear,’ he had begged. ‘I should like it to stand just outside my room, in that recess on the landing.’

As a matter of course his wish had been gratified, and now and then he had played a little wandering music on it himself ; now

and then, too, his wife had played ; but more frequently he had asked his niece to play the things he loved best : simple, plaintive pieces of music they were for the most part, demanding more expression than execution. One especial favourite was a ‘*Pregghiera*,’ from the *Zampa* of Herold, a prayer that seemed more like a quiet yielding up of all that was left to offer than like beseeching or yearning. He had never ceased to weary of this.

And now, this autumn morning, he asked once more for the piano to be opened ; he made the request so simply, so naturally, that Thorhilda felt no sense of incongruity.

‘Play it once again, dear, the prayer !’ he asked, holding out his hand, which his niece took and held in hers for a moment or two.

The sunlight was lower now, lower upon the white coverlet of the bed. The shadow of the ash-tree leaves still danced to and fro ; the room was still flooded with the light of the morning sun, and he who lay there wished to have it so.

They were all there, those whom he loved

best. His wife sat beside him, restraining her tears with all the strength of self-control she had. Hartas Theyn and Damian Aldenmede stood side by side at a little distance. Barbara Burdas was by the window. She would have left the room, but the dying man had wished her to remain, thinking in his own heart that her calm strength would help to strengthen others.

It might have seemed strange to some that anyone should wish for music in that last dread hour of life ; but there was no strangeness in the request for anyone who had known Hugh Godfrey intimately. Thorhilda understood, and complied at once ; and even for herself it was well that she did.

The notes came softly, gently—ah ! that one might reproduce them here with all their beautiful yielding and renunciation—sad beauty it is, yet even the sadness is pure and unearthly.

There was a smile on the face of the dying man, a look of quiet and perfect happiness, as he lay and listened. When the last note had been played, he looked up for his niece's return to his bedside.

‘Thank you, Thorda,’ he said, speaking with not much apparent effort. ‘And now I am going to sleep. . . . Let me say good-bye. . . . And let me say something else I have not had the courage to say as yet. It is this. I say it to one and all. I say it with all the strength left to me. *Do not sorrow for me when I am gone ! . . .* I entreat you not to sorrow.

‘You remember the words heard of him to whom the vision was vouchsafed in the Isle of Patmos—words uttered by a voice from Heaven, saying :

“Write : *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth : Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours.*”

‘That they may rest ! . . . I have not talked much of my weariness, have I, Millicent dear ? But I have been *very* tired. . . . Life is a very tiring thing. . . . I have an opinion—I have held it long—that human life will not always be so tiring. . . . I think people will see, will have their eyes opened to discern when their friends, their neighbours, are breaking down, dying for very tiredness. And then they will help

each other. . . . They will not wait to show their sympathy by sending a beautiful wreath of white flowers to the grave-side. . . . No, they will see a little before; and help will be given; and people will rest. They will know what it is to rest in life—not in death only. . . . And there are other changes coming—greater than these. I shall see them, but not now. I shall behold them, but not nigh. . . . But I have no wish to wait to see—no, none at all. . . . I am too weary—so very weary that I am glad to go.

‘Glad—yes, but not glad as those are who enter into life singing. No; I must enter sighing, if, indeed, I enter at all—sighing for things done, for things left undone.

‘If there be any singing, it will be the song of those who make joy in the presence of the Angels of God over each sinner that repents.

‘Those who make joy in the presence of the Angels! . . . Who are they? . . . Surely they must be of those who know of the sins, the sufferings of the human beings who repent? . . . Knowledge they must have of us

who sin—yes, knowledge and sympathy—deep and keen sympathy with every soul acquainted with spiritual failure. . . . And which of us is not acquainted with such failure? . . .

‘We have dreams—nay, more than dreams, more than visions, more than ideals—we have a well-defined model of life set before us in closest detail, minutest detail. . . . And we will not see it. If we are now and then compelled to *see*, we refuse to follow.

‘We refuse. . . . Now that I lie here, dying, I see that I myself *have refused* to live up to the standard of life demanded of me.

* * * * *

‘Aldenmede. . . . Thorda. . . . *Live the life I would now live if I could*’

EPILOGUE.

Two years have passed by—years of change, of joy, of sorrow to almost every one of those whose life-story has been told or touched upon in this brief history.

As a matter of course, there is a new Rector at Yarburgh Rectory—a young, strong, energetic man, who has had his own way to fight, and has fought somewhat bravely. If some new story-teller were to tell *his* tale, and to tell it truly, it would be worth the reading. But, indeed, I think he could tell it best himself. If his story should perchance be as lively as his sermons, one might consider that a new departure in autobiography had been taken.

The old way of ending a story to the music of the church bells that ring out the old solo of single life, ring in the beautiful new duet of

the life to be, is not at all a way to be decried. It is commonplace, you say ; so is the fact it represents.

But the art to tell the true story of the marriage that took place at Yarburgh awhile ago is not mine. People said it was a very beautiful wedding—that the two people principally concerned, that is to say, Thorhilda Theyn and Damian Aldenmede, looked, each of them, so grand, so great, that the onlookers felt as if they had never seen either of them with any true appreciation before. And it was not the dress—even Mrs. Kerne, the bride's aunt, made haste to say that. No, it was not the dress—for even Miss Theyn's dress, though it was white, and light, and suggestive of all maiden purity, was yet not a costly or studiously impressive costume. The *Danesborough Gazette* described it in detail ; describing also the dress of the two bridesmaids, one of whom was the bride's sister, Miss Rhoda Theyn, and the other the Honourable Sarah Thelton. Other details were added, among the rest, that Mr. and Mrs. Aldenmede had started on their wedding tour a few hours after the ceremony. They had

decided upon the small and quaintly attractive hotel in the Finstermüntz Pass as a place in which to live for awhile in perfect beauty, in perfect quiet. How perfect the beauty was can hardly be told in words. The snow was white upon the Alpine heights; the mountain torrents rushed rapidly down the scarred rocks, among the dark pines. All day long the sun shone brilliantly into the ravine—shining with such force, such glad exhilaration as made of life a new and keen pleasure.

‘Every morning, as soon as I am fairly awake, I feel new made,’ Mrs. Aldenmede declared. ‘I believe that if I might live here I should never grow old. . . . And you, Damian, you look ten years younger than you did on the day on which I first saw you!’

‘You remember that day?’

‘Remember it? Am I likely to forget? . . . What I would forget, if I could, is the blindness that came after.’

‘And long ago I commanded you to put all recollection of that away. . . . Dear, we cannot afford to look too much into the past. We can none of us afford that. Where is

the man or woman whose past is not spoiled or marred in one way or another? All we have to do is to repent, to confess when we have erred, and then set out, brightly, strongly, on a new and better way. And there is much for us to do. Our life will not be empty of work, of thought, of much care for others. . . . I want to prepare you for that, dear; for work rather than leisure; for thought rather than ease. . . . I expect that there will be no grain of the knowledge, the experience you have learned while with Mrs. Thurstone but will not be of use to you now—of use to others.'

'And are you fearing that I shall not be glad to be of use?'

'You ask that question too lightly for me to give any formal answer. If you were truly afraid of my opinion it would be different. . . . No; . . . I expect that I shall only have to exert my influence in the way of restraint.'

There was another pause, broken by Mrs. Aldenmede. They were sitting on one of the rustic seats near the lower part of the garden—if indeed so wild and uncultivated a spot

could be called a garden at all. A light wind was whispering in the pines, catching the tops of the tall campanulas; a perfect chorus of crickets were chirping loudly in the grass.

‘I hope you have been impressed by one thing,’ Thorda said at last. ‘I have been your wife now seven weeks, and I have not asked you seven questions concerning your future home—yours and mine.’

Damian smiled.

‘I have been greatly impressed,’ he replied; ‘but I think I have understood. . . . It was a little penance, was it not?’

‘Not a little one. I have wanted to know so much.’

‘It is somewhat strange that you should have kept your silence unbroken until to-day.’

‘Is it? . . . Why? . . . Is to-day more than any other day?’

‘In one sense it is. . . . You saw what a packet of letters I had this morning?’

‘Yes; and I saw that one or two absorbed you, and that you gathered them up, and took them away, and never spoke of them to me at all.’

‘And yet you ask no question! You are a dear, patient wife. . . . It consoles me to think that reward may come.’

‘It *has* come; I know it; I *know* that something has happened! Tell me what!’

Damian Aldenmede rose up from his seat and walked up and down the road for awhile. The expression on his face was very grave.

‘I ought not to keep you in suspense,’ he said at last. ‘My uncle is dead; he died suddenly nearly four days ago. The telegram that was sent has never reached us. It is too late for us to dream of going to King’s Alden for the funeral. . . . I am very sorry; and I think—I fear we must go soon.’

Mrs. Aldenmede received the news in silence. Though she did not understand all, she knew much; at any rate, she knew that the two sons of Sir Ralph Aldenmede had been dead for some years. King’s Alden—a place of which she had heard from others—would now belong to her husband; and the title would be his—and *hers*. But

she recollected that, in all probability, no great wealth would come with the title, while assuredly great responsibility would come. This was what her husband had tried to prepare her for.

Presently she joined him as he walked up and down, placing her arm in his, and walking silently for a while.

‘King’s Alden is a pretty place, is it not?’ she asked by-and-by.

‘Pretty? No, dear, I should not call it pretty. I do not suppose it could ever be made so. . . . Still, we will do what we can, and we need not live there more than you like.’

* * * * *

It was not much more than a month later when one evening a carriage drove in at the gates of the avenue of chestnuts that lined the way to King’s Alden. It was early twilight. The tall trees almost shut out the sky. The broad white road gleamed straight all the way before them; here and there a marble vase held some rare late-flowering plant; here and there a fountain was playing in the midst of a bed of gay flowers.

There were lights in the windows all along the front of the house ; a stately house it was, built by Vanbrugh, and frequently mentioned as one of the architect's master-works, though rather for its beauty of proportion than for its size or grandeur. It was built of the red granite of the neighbourhood ; yet it had in the daylight a curiously cold and hard look.

Damian Aldenmede, who had seen it in his youth, had had a strong fear that the present mistress of King's Alden might be rather repelled than attracted by the first sight of it. He was glad that the gray twilight lent so much soft mystery to it, and to its surroundings—glad too that their late arrival necessitated the lighting of many lamps and candles. All seemed bright enough now. There were some dozen of the old servants of the place gathered to greet them ; flowers and plants had been placed in abundance ; and above, on every side of the four-square hall, the portraits of former possessors looked down, not all of them Aldenmedes.

The place had changed hands more than

once since Sir John Vanbrugh had received his final cheque from the first owner. But the place had been long enough in the hands of the ancestors of Sir Damian Aldenmede for him to be enabled to feel, if not pride, then certainly satisfaction, in taking possession of a place that he hoped to be able to look upon as a home for him and for his for generations to be. It was no low or unworthy sensation that he felt as he handed his wife from the carriage that had been sent to meet them ; escorted her up the wide gray steps, into the stately old entrance-hall.

A white-headed man, grave and venerable, the steward of the late owner of King's Alden, came forward with a little speech, that seemed to die on his lips as Lady Aldenmede hastened with girlish haste from her husband's side and took the old man's hand. She could bear no more of his formal and studied words.

'I am glad, very glad to come to a home where there are some who are glad to see me,' she said, with enthusiasm in every tone and look.

Then, turning to the others who stood near, she said :

‘ It will require time to make us known to each other ; but no time is needed for me to assure you that we shall do our best to make this house a real home for everyone who may live under its roof—a real home, a Christian home, God granting that it be so. . . . I will tell you later all I mean by that ; and my husband will tell you better than I can. He has an idea that the true home is the world’s true centre. I need hardly say that I agree with him ; indeed, how much I agreed, I did not know till this present hour.’

Then, quite suddenly, the momentary enthusiasm failed, or rather the power to express it failed.

‘ I haven’t made a speech, have I, dear ?’ Lady Aldenmede asked of her husband when they were left alone in the wide yet cheery-looking room, which had been prepared for them by no unwilling hands.

Flowers were there ; they were everywhere. The dressing-table in Lady Aldenmede’s room was a very miracle of loveliness,

and signs of care, of thought, were visible on every hand. It was not wonderful that half an hour later, when her husband came to see if she were dressed for dinner, he found her in tears — tears not easily charmed away.

‘It seems as if God Himself had rained down upon one’s head the coals of fire, the vengeance of an extreme and tender lovingness. . . . You see it all, Damian, do you not? Remember how I fell because of my dread of poverty, of a cold and naked life. Then at the last moment I was saved; and after that it seemed as if all else must be penitence, as if only an extreme of privation could reconcile me to myself. And though I had a sort of fear in marrying you, a fear that my time of probation might probably be at an end, I did not dream of this, how could I? How could I dream of anything so far beyond the brightest earthly prospect ever opened to me, even in thought before. And now, now I feel so small, so mean, so unworthy. It is as if some one had cast a splendid gift at me with words of scorn. And yet this is no right mood, and no, I do

not rightly express my true mood, not all of it. I am grateful, I am *very* grateful, and I am happy in the midst of all my regretful sorrow, I am very happy! . . . We can do so much now, can we not, Damian? There must be something to be done in a neighbourhood like this!

‘*Something!* I fear that everything waits to be done. So far as I know, the entire district about King’s Alden has been neglected, and this for generations. It will require our time, our money, our prayers, our patience, and the utmost of our help and strength. . . . Do not be afraid, dear, do not dread an unbroken felicity.’

‘It is better so.’

‘It is much better. . . . It seems like a paradox, but I am happier far in knowing that my happiness is not likely to be unshaded, that the shadow of the crosses that fall upon other lives may cast the blessing of that shadow over my own, over both our own. . . . So we need not fear.’

‘No. . . . Yet is it not strange how an element of fear seems almost always to

be mingled with any sudden or great felicity ?

‘Yes, it is strange ; but I for one would not wish it otherwise. And since it seems almost universal there is doubtless some truth hidden underneath to be discovered at a later date. Often it seems to me that the world is yet but in its infancy. We know so little ; we discern that there is so much yet to be known.’

‘So it has seemed to me,’ Thorda replied ; ‘yet I fancy that each one of us by our human life (if truly lived) may advance the science of human living somewhat.’

‘Ah ! there you touch upon an immense truth. Our life if truly lived ! We can none of us grasp all that that means in a single moment. Only the surface ideas occur to us. We know that we should be patient, be temperate, self-denying ; that we should have compassion for the sorrows of others, nay, that we should seek out such sorrows, set ourselves to avert sorrows that are only on the way to others ; but there is much beyond that we do not recognise. Which of us has a truly tender dread of the ills that

mar the inner life of the people about us? Nay, do we not start aside and leave suspected suffering to cure itself, or develop itself, as may be in the nature of it? Dreading the evil of interference, we strike upon the rock of neglectful indifference.'

'And how shall any human being perceive the right medium?'

'Only by being lovingly human. The true lover of humanity can hardly make grievous mistakes. If he should, his very lovingness would cause his mistakes to be forgiven.

'Charity beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. . . . Charity never faileth.'

* * * * *

In the spring of the year that followed, Sir Damian and Lady Aldenmede went once again to Ulvstan Bight. Mrs. Godfrey went with them—indeed, she went with them everywhere, as a cherished and valued companion, one who helped to make their home-life richer and fuller, and graced it with much knowledge and experience.

The meeting between those who came

from King's Alden and those who came from Garlaff Grange was as interesting as it was affectionate. Mr. and Mrs. Hartas Theyn were foremost in the group of people who entered the drawing-room at the new Alexandra Hotel. The Squire and Rhoda had purposely lingered a little behind, but it was easy to see that no ill-feeling had inspired them. The dinner passed off lightly and pleasantly, all undue warmth of emotion being decorously kept in the background for that evening.

It was next morning on the cliff top that Sir Damian Aldenmede, meeting Mrs. Hartas Theyn, was enabled to say a fitting word—a word that seemed to close a certain chapter of the family history. And Barbara replied with a dignity, a gentleness, a winningness all her own.

‘I always look upon that day when I met you on the scaur as the beginning of my life's happiness,’ she said. ‘The beginning of all true search after truth ; of all that has been good and helpful to me. Before you had spoken to me of anything but the common speech of the day I had wished to do some-

thing for you—to rise in some way a little nearer to your level. You awoke something in me that had slept before, but could never sleep again. And then you showed all your true generosity and helped me in every way; and then she, Thorhilda, began to help me too; and *how* I loved you both, and felt as if my love were all one! It is so natural now, to be able to think of you together. Indeed, I think I have never thought of you apart. . . . And oh! I am happy, very happy! To think of my being even related to you—to the very people I love so much! Yes, I never thought to be so happy!’

‘And it is an all-round sort of happiness?’
Damian Aldenmede asked.

Barbara looked up quickly.

‘You are meaning with regard to my husband? He has only one fault—an undue humility. I shall never cure him of it. But I am not sure that I wish to do so. . . . If he has another fault, it is an undue generosity. The money he gives away, the people he asks to come and stay with us, would be beyond belief if I were to tell you of it all in detail. But, somehow, we do

not really seem the poorer for it. . . . And if we were, I believe that we should still be happy—even very happy; he is so gentle, and so thoughtful, and so careful of me and mine. You know that he has sent Jack to a good school at Danesborough; and if he were little Ilda's own father he could not love her more. And the child's love for him is most touching! If I had any jealousy in me it would certainly be awakened when I see her rushing to the door with her little arms outspread to meet him, and his outstretched to clasp her! . . . Ah! yes; I am a very happy woman!

Damian Aldenmede went away from the top of the cliff in a mood not easy to describe—the elements being so very various. Gratitude stirred in him, and wonder, and reverence; and last, but not least, repentance for the want of faith and hope that had darkened so many of his days, and darkened them so unreasonably.

‘Why do we not *trust* more?’ he asked of himself. ‘Surely the want of trust means defect in one's self! To live nobly, rightly, humanly, would be to store up a reserve for

the days to be—even though the days should be few and evil.

“ ‘Few and evil’ we deem them, these days of ours—but that is when they are overpast.

‘In the beginning all is lightness and brightness—and all we have, all we desire, is flooded in the light of hope. Then disappointment follows, with perhaps despair; and the utmost we can do is to hold on for awhile, as people cling to a wreck in the darkness and the storm.

‘And after the storm comes calm, with daybreak, and the sun shining over the tops of the dark mountains of grief that had surrounded us on every side. So we come to understand the ordering of this human life of ours, that it is but as a travelling from the cradle to the grave—leading us, now by fair valleys, clothed with the olive and the vine, now by barren Alpine heights, where only snow and hail and mist lend variation to the scene. Again we descend, perhaps to the dreary shore of some dead sea of life, where we may wander on un-hopefully, nay, even unwisely. We would

lie down and die if we could do so sinlessly ; and we wonder that sin should be in the wish.

‘ But by-and-by the sun rises once more—the sun of faith, of hope, of belief in all that makes life worth the living. Then it is that we rise to full consciousness of all that lies in the tender, yearning, loving saying :

“ *Ye will not come unto Me, that ye might have life.*”

‘ Then it is that at last we awaken to full perception of that great, grand truth, there is no life but that—the life hid in Christ Jesus.

“ *I am the Life, the Truth, the Way !*”

‘ There is no other life, no other truth, no other way. All else is pain and darkness, and ignorance, and death.

‘ There is no other way but the way of the cross, the way of daily, hourly self-denial, of perpetual watchfulness ; the way of unceasing prayer.

“ *Pray without ceasing.*”

‘ That is life’s last secret.

‘ The man or woman who is acquainted

with that secret will be in no danger of exchanging his or her soul for any mess of pottage to be offered by this world of ours —this seductive, tempting, disappointing world.'

THE END.

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